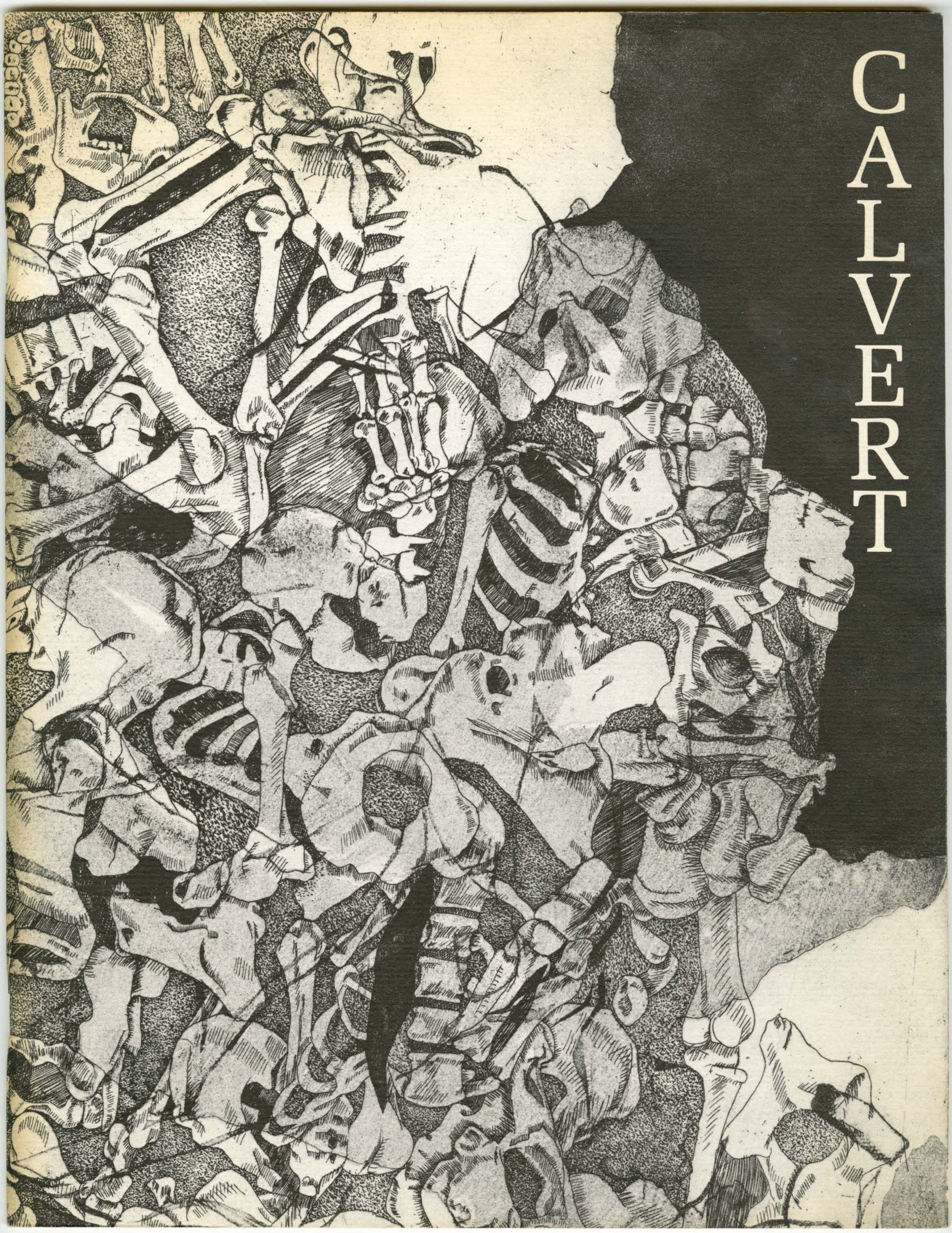
CALVERT

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Thanks to Eddie Gold and Artemis Packard for their help with this issue of the CALVERT.

The Chimney Child

Light
is a memory
of when I came out
from that first warm
dark;
The man in
white
slapped me on the rear, and
I began to cry,
so they put me in a
chimney
for safekeeping.

A long time I smouldered--
a blackbird had built
a nest on the chimney;
taught me time to
find out what fire is
An idea of nests
An inkling of blackbirds

which do eventually
fly away,
like ashes from the
chimney.

Now from the parlor
sofa sounds say--
My, my, Marshmont
See how the snow looks so much whiter this season!
I, chuckling in the chimney, say--
No-o-o, no-o-o,
the ashes are darker.

Patrice M. Wilson

Poem

At this time of year, this day, I am a rash
of cat scratch and half-moon burns;
gouged with burrs and rakes,
blotched reddish with the irascibility of sleep,
I seem out of sorts.
I am neither steaming in the garden
nor a kite in the sky
nor do I cut the evening coming on me
like a turn in the road
or a tree against the sundown.

All I can manage to meet this hour:
a sign of lymphatic distress at its arrival;
a line of trauma enters
at the half moon of my finger,
and all the ends of nails are split.
What with hasty clothings and unclothings
and catching in the nestings of my hair,
the thumbs are tearing at the side--
but it is the proper time to tear.

Believe me, I am neither flowerets of blue
in the dead wall of pine
nor am I in suntime birch against blue sky.
I am scar, reddening where the flesh has gathered,
a sag, a rut, a saddening--
yet I have survived boys who,
beside the highway with stones to hurl,
have hurled them at my promises.

I am, at this time of year and day,
half balanced in the pull of my hips,
half certain in the bend of my back.
I imagine
red wing black birds break away from me
or fledglings fall.

It is hardest to be rooted when the sun
goes down between the winter trees.
It is hardest at this hour to go on.

--Ruthellen Quillen

Woman on a Summer Day

There's an ancient picnic bench
Beneath the wind and trees.

Trees dive in the sea-sky, leaves
Like the hair of bowing mistress.

Whatever love or laughter made near
The bench has long blown over,

Into the grass; a settling--
And the grass sweeps long into seed.

She leans back, a slight billowing
Of her blouse, feeling of roots.

Patric Pepper

The Execution of Sir Thomas More

Any young man of sense would envy you:
To go to death in Sunday best and joke
To the blade, "Watch it! I've a short neck!"
And give the man your gold to see it through.
That faultless faith seems boundless as the sea:
Your soul dissolved-- now Water with Water.
Your trust in Him stays like granite, greater
Than all that He gave them on Galilee.

Yet there's doubt that you'd receive new steel
As stone or water would. You are Human.
A *new* blade finds the bottom *and* the core,
Drilling a jagged dream to make one reel
In disbelief: visions of a human
Soul left on a rocky, ragged shore.

Patric Pepper

EMERGENCIES

1.

Alone in emergencies
burning the red flares
no man can see

no man can offer assistance

2.

Always in the dark
of another man's shadow

that hard black shape
choking the light

Charles R. Spicer

THIS WOMAN

1.

This woman thinks love is
a stairway. She makes me
feel like a lesser Fred Astaire.
I dance my way up her love
and I dance my way down her love
and I dance.....
and I dance.....
AND I DANCE!

Please, help me to rest.
My leather has worn eyelid thin.

2.

This woman thinks love is
a stairway. Did you ever
lean on a broken banister?

3.

This woman thinks love is
a stairway: "You approach it
from the bottom, then you race
to the top!"
What can I say?
Either she is right or she is wrong.
Nevertheless, she has some peculiar ideas.

Charles R. Spicer

Delivering Hay to Elsie Franklin's Father

Up the dirt road,
dipping,
left wheel to right
right to left,
a wooden cart
stuffed with straw,
waddles
through the autumn haze.

Stray bales,
loose from a hasty loading,
inch toward the wagon's edge.

Two Rockwell boys,
dusty and long,
gesture like sun on water,
bumping their way to Franklin's farm.

They laugh loud
licking their strawberry lips.
They never look back.

The broad oxen,
brown as dusk on Garner's Mountain,
draw boys, cart, and hay,
slowly through the gate
and down to big Jim Franklin,
whose blue eyed daughter Elsie
whistles like a sky lark
and swims naked in the duck pond
through November.

Karen Hesse

Srbo Ivanovski

EVERY NIGHT

Every night, I take you away
from the ordinary things:
away from the mirror,
the needles,
the broken windows,
the same old room
with the same old chairs.
I take you so far away,
so far away,
that I leave you on grass, and you sink
to rise up freshened,
pearled with dew,
with fresh dew.
You stand there as if cut in marble,
but warm--
warm like the lake's murmur.
Lie on the grass
and watch the disturbing snakes;
silently they will leave us,
silently return at dusk;
Lie down and watch, stretching
from ourselves to its end,
the green of the valley.

translation by Milne Holton

MONDAY

Each day of his life pre-cut: flat, square and even-toned as the calendar pages he flipped face-down each morning when he got to work. Sometimes, if he arrived before the others, he would sneak like a thief into their flipped-down days -- who had *they* lunched with? what meetings had *they* attended? what messages did *they* leave for themselves? As if reading diaries, fumbling through these secret notations, searching for -- what? The closest he came was a two-month-old entry three desks over, in Tom Murphy's calendar: "Margo -- lunch." Tom's wife was Evelyn, he had no daughters. Margo? It kept him curious the rest of the day, wakeful an hour after going to bed. Catherine asked him, with a tired mixture of concern and annoyance, "Why are you tossing so?" He said, "Just restless. Think I'll get some cocoa." Sitting in the dim kitchen, sipping, thinking suddenly, would Tom be so stupid to put it right down on his own calendar? Laughing out loud at his own thin imaginings, then returning to bed, sleeping easily and dully now, content that his friend was equally dreamless.

The weekends holding the days of the week together like pair after pair of identical bookends. A relentless predictibility: Saturdays for chores and errands, Saturday nights for bridge or movies, Sundays for church and family visits. Catherine saying once: "Our life is so full. We never have to sit around and figure out what to do. There's always something on." He smiling, saying, "We *are* very lucky," but thinking, I am crazy not to feel blessed.

What he felt was safe, which he knew had v a l u e. He saw how his children thrived on safety -- whereas he had carreened through his own boyhood as if in a car racing through the Hall of Horrors at an amusement park. Monsters rising up out of the dark void, sudden shrieks, bells and sirens breaking a quiet stretch, desperate failed struggles for bravery: one bad, fearful time after another. Then Catherine: like a needed rest. Their girl Sandy was like that -- a shallow pond, never flooded, scarcely rippling, only the quiet water, the clear still surface: where you'd float toy boats or allow small children to wade without fearing they'd drown in a sudden deep spot. Matt, their son, had greater energy, but none of it dangerous. A turbulence neatly channelled, never out of bounds: baseball, football, hiking, bicycle races, swimming meets -- a continual emptying, a studied relinquishing of power. Both his children always knew where they were going or staying: they had compasses built into them like extra bodily organs. Whereas he had groped like a lost traveller over the rough terrain of his own boyhood.

A bad Sunday -- Aunt Clara staying on and on after a three o'clock dinner, all the others gone to their homes to prepare themselves for the week, but Aunt Clara old enough now that the days ran together like an unravelled thread, weekends collapsed into weekdays, no sense left of how others, younger, structured the days and nights, how Sunday evening had special priorities, she not done until after ten with her stories of the lost farm and the failed grocery store and the drained-out husband twenty years buried; then he driving her home across the city, lights blinking off in other homes, other men already at rest, drinking in sleep for the Monday on the other side of the night. He woke up tired, and still a little angry. She was not his aunt, she was not from his side. Catherine, at breakfast, sensing his pique: "What's wrong, Brian? Mad it's Monday?" Her cheeriness like his grandmother's pinches on his young cheek: a hateful manner of loving, beyond his understanding. He could never tickle his children for fear it would offend them in the same manner: did they think him cold?

Leaving the house, flinching at the whirling shards of snow: he should have worn boots, by evening it might be sticking. He thought of going back, he was sure Catherine was standing there in the hall, holding the galoshes, her head tilted in an angle of mild rebuke, her eyes shining with her superior domestic intelligence. Instead, he framed possible evening explanations: "Ed was supposed to bring me home, I didn't assume I'd be walking from the bus stop today," or "The weather report said clearing, it was supposed to clear by mid-afternoon."

On the bus, shaking off the wet crystals like a dog after a bath, flapping off the wetness from his overcoat, then realizing he'd sprayed the woman behind him: "So sorry," he said, and she looked at him as Catherine would have, had he gone back for the boots. His favorite place, the seat in the rear where you sat four abreast but could at least stretch

out your legs, was full. He looked around for a lesser space, spotted one, took it, then was sorry. The man beside him was snoring: disconcerting in the morning, what had the fellow done all night, what had him so fatigued when he ought to be, if not bouncy, at least alert and open-eyed? Brian thought of leaving the seat, hanging onto a strap for the ride downtown, but decided against it: people's eyes would round at the strangeness of relinquishing the place, and it would say more about the snoring man than was justified -- suspicions of body odor or disease or sexual advances, when there was nothing but noisy, inexplicable sleep. So he stayed where he was, putting his back like a screen between the man and himself, raising his paper in front of him: quite self-contained, for all his discomfort.

The bus was moving slowly, hazardously, the traffic all blaring horns and grinding tires. He finished the paper and they were only half-way there. A minute or so of passenger observation, most of them familiar if unknown faces -- a handful he'd never seen, their cars probably garaged today against the weather. The reason why his back seat was full and he sitting here beside a snoring stranger. Nature can change everything in a moment of whim, he thought; he felt the Ice Age at his back, the glacier roaring down Endicott Avenue, overtaking the creeping snarled traffic, changing them all in a moment to a motionless ice sculpture, the entire city now frozen and buried, his children petrified in the schoolyard, Catherine locked in place, the galoshes still locked in her hands. . . . He bagan to read the transit ads, and had them finished by the time his corner pulled up to the bus.

Most in the office hadn't yet arrived. A few called in and feigned hapless skids or frozen ignitions. Gathering around the coffee machine, warming hands on the styrofoam cups, inhaling the steam to defrost the lungs as if survivors of an Arctic trek or skiers off the slopes. The camaraderie of natural disaster and perilous games. Then the young red-lipped girl from the main switchboard -- had he ever seen her standing before? -- rushing in, angry: "The damn thing doesn't stop lighting up, I need a break, I've got a sore throat already, somebody pitch in for me while I drink some tea." Spoken like a general. Then turning right to him: "Your wife called, Brian. Call her back -- *if* you can get an outgoing line." He nodding: he *had* thought of calling her, she'd be concerned. A sweet-faced, clear-eyed typist -- he *had* seen her standing, many times -- agreeing to take the board awhile, asking: "Why's it so jammed up this morning?" All innocence. The red-lipped tea drinker, looking like Catherine with galoshes and the lady he'd dampened: "It's the wives calling, mostly. Or people saying they'll be late. *Of course* they'll be late; if they're not here yet, they *are* late." The typist shrugging, perhaps not understanding, not really caring, going to her duty.

For an instant, a light dying on the telephone on his desk. He pressing it into service, relighting it, dialing: "Catherine? It's me, got here in one piece. Let me tell you, it was treacherous!"

She, inevitably: "You forgot your boots," he finding himself silently mouthing each syllable she spoke. Something then about the children -- got to school before it started icing up, thank goodness. And she'd just stay put. Wash to do, anyway, and maybe the kitchen floor. "Before you know it," she exuded, "the day's gone."

The rest of his morning spent monitoring the weather, little work done, a few minutes here and there at his desk, then back to the group at the windows, the commentary on the precipitation and the clogged traffic running on for hours and resembling the efforts of television newsmen to talk all day about one space shot or a single murdered politician. No Monday morning staff meeting -- cancelled by the supervisor who remained imprisoned at his residence, watching quiz shows and invading his wife's privacy. By the end of the morning, it began to feel to Brian like days at school during flu epidemics, half the class home sick, the room seeming to double in size, the teachers or substitutes clamming up and disappearing behind novels brought from home, the children nearly unguarded, excited for awhile with the space and the falling away of schedule, but growing bored, almost jealous of the others tucked into warm beds, sipping fruit juice and having chests rubbed with linament.

In the cafeteria in the basement of the building, lunching with Tom Murphy and another accountant, Phil Lester. Phil a bachelor still at home at forty-two with his mother: nothing to envy there. Then Tom saying, halfway through his ravioli, "Phil, I know you're not the kind that's keen on matchmakers, so tell me to shut up if you want."

Phil not saying anything, taking another bite of tuna on toast.

Then Tom continuing: "My sister's moved back to town. Don't think you ever met her. She's a hairdresser. But real bright, Phil, and attractive. Not beautiful, I won't put you on. But you wouldn't at all mind being seen with her. Just never got married, you know how that is. Lots of relationships, guys crazy about her, but never the right combination. She's not the kind of girl that would marry just *anybody*. Anyhow, she moved to California for awhile, but got lonely for home, you know. So she's back, got her own place and all, and I thought, Phil Lester and my Sister Margo..."

Brian continuing with his hamburger, digesting without expression the dull facts of Tom-and-Margo. His sister. His goddam sister. The embarrasing image of himself writhing in insomniac fantasies. Not that he hadn't squelched the notions, even without the proof of propriety. Still. Not a pretty picture, a grown man snickering in the dark over dreamed-up dirt, not even his own. When he was younger, at least, he'd try mind leaps over his *own* narrow spaces. Dragging his father home from the tavern one night, the old man screaming at him out of some still-lucid place in his soggy brain:"You think I'm a bum, doncha? A drunken bum? What the hell do you know, you soft-bellied bookworm? Get it through your head you ain't no rich man's son, you ain't going to no college and you ain't going to be no damn writer! Get off my back with your goddam dreams!" Dreamed himself, however, right into a scholarship, right into the university, right into Catherine's sweet comfort, right into the School of Accounting....

"You," she said, "need something solid under your feet. A foundation. You can always write on the side, Brian."

He didn't. He was not one for hobbies. He was no Wallace Stevens.

Four o'clock. A sudden dazzle of sun, by five the streets deglazed, the shallow drifts settling into puddles. The bus speeding over its route, the driver visibly shaken and tired from a day of peril. Brian, himself, weary from the shapeless hours, the chattering obsession with the weather, the spreading boredom with the diminishing storm. He wouldn't have minded being snowed in all night in the office, the office transformed into a shelter, a kind of inn for stranded travelers: *then* they'd really talk, open up to each other, spill their secrets, consider cannibalism when the food ran

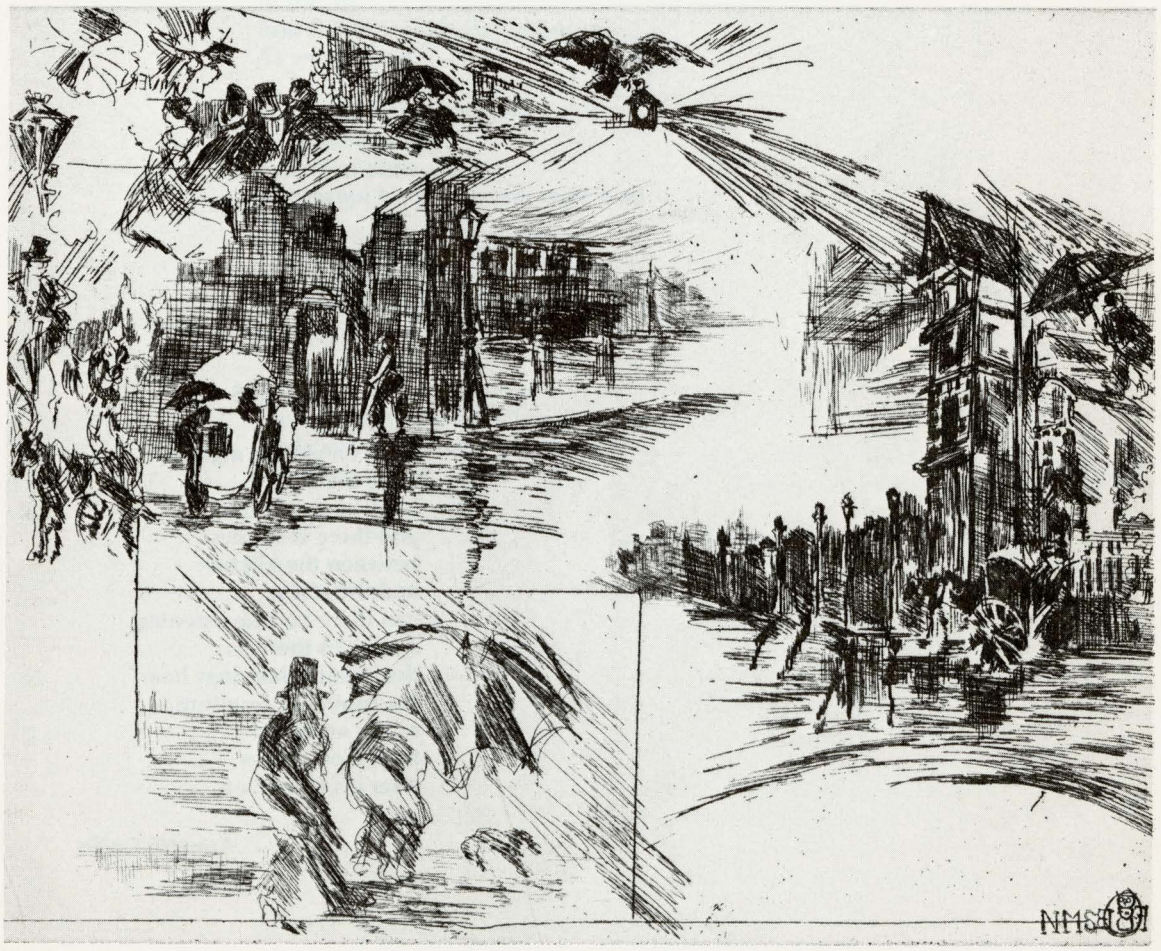
out.... He grinned at the stupid, gruesome image; the woman he faced on the bus assumed the smile was for her and returned it; he did not know what to do with her gift and began reading transit ads. Danger ebbed.

His stop upon him before he was ready. Usually, some inner clock told him soon, soon, and he'd have time to fish out coins, fold the paper, prepare his exit. Not today: the driver groaning "Brookfield Road" and Brain caught without the right change or the proper poise. Lucky, at least, he'd sat up front (the back row full again with usurpers, squatters) and wouldn't have to pull the cord, announce to everyone his lapse of attention. A few awkward moments finding two quarters, the driver staring glazed-eyed out the window. Then the ground under his feet again, the concrete cracked and gullied in the most familiar, genial manner. Though, not long ago, however, he'd written to the city about this very sidewalk, how one could twist an ankle or lose a heel. Now he wished for the letter back in his hand: he did not want the corner grayed and flattened, he felt like a traitor standing there on its doomed character. They'll never get to it, he told himself. Still, it would hang over his head.

Sandy's face cameoed in the window, her smile coming out to touch him on the eyes. At the door, her cheek smoothed against his stubble, so even he could sense his own roughness. "Where's your mom?" "Pickin' up Matt. Had football practice since it cleared up." Her palms uplifted to praise the miracle.

Then the car, as if summoned, turning into the driveway. The back door slamming and Matt barrelling in, still padded, strapped and helmeted as much against his own momentum as against the others on the field. Catherine following, clucking at the mudprints spreading like animal tracks over the linoleum. And Brian stopping her, kissing her hair, taking the grocery bags out of her arms, wrapping his own around her familiar roundness, whispering desire into her ear. But she warning: "Brian, stop, you'll squeeze me to death!"

Joyce Kornblatt



SHOW STOPPER

The conversation
was interupted so
I could casually
flick my nipple
so it stood
on end,
illustrating
my point.

Annette Curtis

SOUNDS

Only on almost nights;
after the birds
have been put out,
and there is stillness
between the kitchen
and the stairs,
can there be true listening.
And then there is;
the sounds that dogs hear,
the tuning of furniture,
or the noise the
television makes
after it's turned off

Annette Curtis

Rickenbacker Causeway

The first time I saw
Blue water
I thought it was a post card
Someone forgot to send

But I could taste salt
In the air
And the Miami skyline changed
As we crossed

To Crandon Park Beach-
My Cuban guide
Talked of bluer waters
And swept his brown arm over it all

As though it were his:
The blue sky,
The whole sea and the sun
Were his

When he stopped the car
I followed him to the edge of the sand
And claimed the blue-green water
Up to my knees.

Saundra Maley

THE MARRIAGE

It was late and about time, they guessed,
so they threw up their hands and married.
It was reported in the *Chronicle* by mistake
the day before: who they were, what they wore.
The table steadied itself meaningfully
under presents. Something seems to have happened
they said, looking deeply into one another,
having babies. The names were written
in the Family Bible, brand new from her
Cousin Henry, a great believer, they laughed.

Desiree Weidaw

ONE FOR FIDELITY

He told me all about it.
He never lies to me. You can't imagine
our evenings! Truth
is a great felicity.
After all, even this
is a kind of fidelity. Besides,
I heard her say, too,
what a bore he was.
I was passing at the time;
she was speaking to a friend
and did not know I was listening.

Desiree Weidaw

Head Down

He disconnects the office intercom,
loosens his tie. His nose
works down the crook in his arm, flannel
sweet with his mother's washday soap,
down winters of cordouroy steam
to his sixth-grade teacher.
Dodge the Indian wars, shut off
the flow of exports from Madagascar
and Miss Kooman points her pointer
and says, "Put your head on the desk."

He can make enough dark with his hands
to let the drum beats in.
Through hemp and chocolate trees
he tracks the star-footed birds
out plains and canyons
scratched through the wood.
Before he raises again his treaty his face
into clock-tick and flourescent light,
he swears he will sometime carve his name
against the rules
deep in the top of the desk forever.

Roderick Jellema

ABANDONED

In the back of a now abandoned store
Lays a constantly mouldering manikin head
The children who play with the head are poor
And the manikin long since dead

Charles R. Spicer

JELLEMA LOOKS FOR HIS ROOTS IN OKLAHOMA

Leaving the Mississippi at St. Louis
he rolls the strange air in his mouth,
tastes wheat dust and sage,
cattle and sheep.
His eye stretches,
racing the sky to the horizon.

As he nears Oklahoma,
the bones of his hands
begin to vibrate
to the gentle calibrations of the land.

Behind each tree
shadows lean tall into ancestors:
Uncle John
who tucked the land into his body,
Grandpa Ed
strong in his religion
and belief in roots.

There is a house here
empty now to winter.
There are sounds:
wasps toiling in their nests,
the creak of derricks,
short grass in the wind.

Stopping for gas in Norman
he takes a small walk,
stretches, watches a yellow dog.
And when the tank is full,
he drives away,
hoping to make the hotel in Vegas
by nightfall.

Steve Govern

Suppose...

Hermits rent rooms in my body
and pay when I want a poem.
I knock
until someone slides a page
under the crack in the door
and I read each line
to know what I'm stealing
to say I wrote.

Joyce Merritt

The Final Scribe

There he is again-
that would-be calligrapher
sitting cross-legged near my desk
fumbling with a pencil.

My silent companion,
respectful of privacy.
A mad grinning poet
in search of a new cursive script
to preserve his voiceless epics.

He has fashioned a language
out of toothy silence.

Yes, I know who he is.
I recognize that grin
of borrowed bridgework
chosen a tooth at a time.

He will scribble no more
when he learns to draw my name.

James A. Crisci

Portrait of Daedelus
Falling.

How many words could fill
my mouth like
pebbles from a beach
before I could say:
"I can see her. The wife
of Daedelus waxes in the
slow morning"
And how can I know that
I understand when you
breathe in my ear and
the ground spirals away
below us?

Look: the ants go down
to their catacombs,
bright moths hung over
their shoulders.
Do you hear them say,
as I do,
"I'm sorry, this is
as deep as I can take you"

We hang together like a
whisper in the throat of
Brueghel's sky.

David Hickman

Beyond the shadows
of alcoholics and
bearded lady
socialites late of
osh kosh and
eaten only by
the finest of
worms ,
down past the iron
gates of Gawler's,
past empty
cartons of
formaldehyde and
make-up,
there is a field
of rye.
It is where I
want to live.

David Hickman

Leaving

for K.T.

1

We slip through the air
on swings,
meet breathless at high speeds,
then sweep away from each other
to sail
and fall back down
and almost touch
and go.

2

Your voice is like bells,
swinging from the gypsy's wagon,
wending itself away at nightfall
through the silence between trains.

3

The heart swings and swings
in its wide
sacristy.
The tongue clangs out
the shape of the hollow.
The bell calms
to tremble,
to shiver all over
in the old quiet.

Eddie Gold

PRELUDE #4

My fist pounds the keys:
a heartbeat
struggling for flight.

I might be beating
flesh, counting
in cut-time, running
bloodless
but you
Chopin
keep me here with you,

bent low,
screaming in E minor,
clutching my chest.

Caryn E. Wiener

Waiting Up

Somebody left the burner on.
It glows
in this kitchen
where I sit
dropping ashes
in my coffee.
If I get up
to switch it off
it will turn as cold
and dark
as the bottom
of my cup.

Serena Karandy

OF THE INFANTS

In a land of golden children and endless soft blowing grasses, where time ticked by in parachuted dandelion seeds, there was a man who lived by the look in a rabbit's eye in mornings covered with the silken sweat from the glassy dew; the way the frogs grunted to each other from their staid lilypads into the grey night; the way a wildflower would look startled as he brushed past on walking through fields. He lived because of chance, and because he did not want the chance of his ever leaving the beautiful mystical land he lived in, he rarely spoke to the strangers of death. When one of them or a pack of them would come around, he would stay in his hut and watch the shadows on the walls, the spiders weaving, or look out the window at the mountains slowly eroding. And after they went away, he would run outside and kiss the children and blow bubbles under water for the scores of iridescent fish, dance and rush through meadows and jump on horses and go riding, riding, flying in the air--anything, anything for life.

He did not really mind the waiting. There was so much to watch and hear. He could see the lovely sparkles of dust twirling to the floor and listen to the quiet music of the silence; he could sit on the dirt floor and feel the warmth of the sun and trace the footprints of ants in the dust; and listen to the soft whispering of the forest, distantly. He could listen to the air parting in front of him and screaming behind him, and feel pretty important.

Which he was, of course. The children could not survive without him to oversee the buttercups and frothy rivers, to tell them when the peaches and apples in the orchard were ready to be eaten, and when the best time was to pick the roses to flavor their tea. In this land, there were only children, and they were all golden lithe nymphs that neither aged nor grew stale, and the man was the same. Long ago, he was appointed this position, to take the children from where the strangers of death left them cold and grey, pale on the hillsides or meadows, and watch them beside the fire in his hut slowly change, with a look of utter peacefulness on their face, to one of the children of the land. Of course, it took some of them a long time to become brown and blonde, but always they did, and roamed their country with the others. The babes he presented to the older children, and watched them grow, never more than children, laughing with the tall grasses in the breeze.

On one particular morning, when the man was waiting, watching a rose bloom on the table, a stranger of death came closer than he had ever seen, a grotesque small creature with wrinkled skin and liquid bones, with eyes that streamed with green pus. It leered in the window of the old man's hut, blinked rapidly for a few seconds, and ran off, chuckling horribly.

The old man got up slowly, frightened. He had never seen one of them close up before, and thought for some reason that that was not good. It took him longer than usual to find the child this time, his feet felt heavy and soft, he couldn't climb the hills or walk through the meadows as fast as he usually could. All of this vaguely disturbed the man, but he reasoned that it was just another event to observe, like a rotting log in a forest was, and decided not to worry. And in a glade of cool trees he found the child.

He was a small boy of no more than ten, with pale white skin, an astonishing amount of jet-black curls framing his face, and speckled brown moons for eyes. When the old man spotted him, he was lying under a tree veiled with Spanish moss, whimpering. "Father, mother," he cried softly with his shallow chest barely moving, as the old man carried him home.

The next day the boy was roused early, even rushed, by the man, who would not tell him where they were going and seemed very worried that they would not get there on time. They hurried out of the hut and down a road that ran past the mountains purple in the sunrise, towards a flashing sea. There the old man stopped, and the boy, thinking they were only resting, sat patiently on the sand before asking, "Father, where are we going?"

"We're here, son." He gazed at the boy curiously. Never before had he felt the urge to perform the ritual so soon. "We've come to bathe in the water. You see, before you can live in this beautiful land, you must at once feel the sea on your head and face, then you can touch and see things the way we do." The boy looked as if he did not understand, so the old man continued. "Here, we can know so much more. Have you ever noticed the shadows of your eyelashes on the sand? The way they appear like tree trunks on an apricot beach, with each pupil a glazed island is a fantastically colored lagoon? Or the small prisms of color on each small groove in your fingertips? They are always there, one needs only to stop and look, to know. Try it now, and after you've bathed, and you'll see the difference."

The boy pressed the side of his head into the sand and peered at his hands, but could not see anything. "Father, are you sure?" he asked quietly. He paused a moment after the man nodded, and then said, just as quietly, "Then wash me off."

They waded in the ocean up to their knees, and as the boy stood solemnly, the old man kissed his forehead and poured water all over his hair from a seashell, murmuring, "Make thyself strong, Daniel, as the wind that tears down the mountains and molds the sand, and makes the algae bend slowly. There is nothing that you and your senses cannot know and sing to the sun about. Within the shell of your

body is eternity."

Later, they walked by the edge of the water, listening to the porpoises laughing and calling to each other. Daniel, for that was now his name, when before he had no other, glanced excitedly everywhere, to see all the old man told him of. He saw it all and so much more: the little particles of sand that ran up the dunes and back again, the sweet music of the wild reeds and rushes of the swamp as they crashed against each other. And the shells! He ran up and down the beach, laughing and picking them as they somersaulted from the ocean, purple and bleached white. He had never realized before how beautiful they were, how each one rested years on the bottom of the dark sea floor, rolling and quietly gathering the best of the color and delicate mother-of-pearl to itself; how they danced a slow happy crescendo as they moved toward shore, pirouetting at each wave. Such fragile timepieces of endless, minute design!

And Daniel kept seeing and thinking of more things than the other children did. He always kept to himself, his slight body consumed by his eyes that never stopped watching things--the arc of a willow in a breeze, or the vibrating wings of a butterfly. The others seemed, to the old man, to be friendly enough to him, until he heard them one day singing in a grove of honeysuckle:

You're all washed up
Your boat's capsized
You're soul's a mess, Daniel,
Cause you ain't baptized!

The old man felt genuinely angry at them. What had Daniel done to deserve this false insult? Better speak to them gently, he thought to himself as he crossed the field towards them. They did not know what would hurt and what would not. Still, their innocence must be limited. The children did not stop, but increased the tempo of the chant as the old man came nearer. They had no fear of anything, he realized, and noticed with horror that they had Daniel inside the circle, and were closing in on him with jealousy and hatred in their faces. The boy stood, slightly bent over like a paranthesis, avoiding the children by staring at the ground. He was half, or less, part--the small quietness of his body was swallowed by the malevolent energy of the others. Yet, he seemed content, knowing that these wheat-colored children with their enormous flapping mouths and yellow-jacket eyes would always be there, circling and buzzing, circling and buzzing, to the air. Or so it seemed to the boy. The children began another verse:

Your skin's all white
You've caused a fuss
We ain't ever gonna like you
Cause you ain't one of us!

The old man stopped then and stood thinking. He ***had*** paid Daniel more attention than the others since he came. And the boy ***hadn't*** turned brown yet, after all the time he'd been in the sun. Strange, his hair hadn't changed either. What was wrong with him, had he some reason not to be here? He shuddered. No, that was not it. Always the children were dead before they came, and always they were unbaptized. That was why they were here, he had been told, and now was no time to question it. But as he watched this smooth alabaster urchin, with a face as cold as the moon and hair arranged as an electric sundial, he did not know. He did not know.

Daniel began hopping on one foot and then the other, as if playing hopskotch, and slowly the world began to change. The old man and the blonde children stopped and could only watch. Yellow and white honeysuckle withered and grew brown and tall, and spun a thick leathered skin of wood; where before the leaves of green whispered quietly now appeared, changed, to rusted pine needles who were quieter still; where before the sun had seemed so close, now floated far away, above the pines, speckling the iron-colored carpet; the railroad-grey motionless rabbits had gone, and in their stead sprang foxes as bright as new copper pennies, trotting daintily through the rich black forest that smelled of earth buried thousands of years. And inside, the man and the children and the boy stared at the streaming sun hitting the forest floor, golden and green, and running forever with the woodpecker's muffled hammering into the air. What is this? asked the old man of himself. What is this and (my God) what has happened? And soon they were all looking at Daniel with awe and delight and terror. He stood just as before, small and still, only now he was smiling secretly, and just a bit wondrous at what he had done. The children, especially the little ones, gathered around and demanded he do it again, but he just smiled and laughed, his gigantic brown eyes watery from staring at the sky too much. And the old man thought: This is what it is, just another brilliant thing to watch and see and feel with your eyes and hands, just another beautiful thing of this land. This is what it is, yet..... Of who was this boy, the one who was like no other? He frightened, yet pleased the man, and he decided it was happy, and so to leave it alone.

And the boy would do it again for them, on boring days, if there were such things as boring days in that land. He turned an emerald valley between two huge shoulders of mountains into a shimmering sapphire sea, with water as clear as glass, surrounded by pools of salty water that held hundreds of graceful sea horses performing their silent ballet effortlessly and endlessly, nuzzling the ferns their tails entwined as they hung upside down, pivoting their eyes as if on mechanical sockets. Daniel watched them for hours, seeing the fans on their backs and ears propel them like the butterflies of Mercury, to kiss the surface reverently. And then he took them to the moors, to show the children the thin pyramids of heather and teach them to learn the scent of a wild pony's mane before you saw it galloping toward you.

Then, the old man thought the boy looked like a medieval minstrel of soft eyes and hair, one who knew the feel of burlap shirts and sleeping in hay in nights of moons skirted by fog, a boy who had looked into a fairy tale lake and saw the wisps of hair around his face as a dragonfly's wings, dragonfly who flew so fast and so silently. But then he looked like any Italian goat boy, who lived by the side of warm beasts and gentle mountain slopes, or an Egyptian who knew the innermost secrets of man. So, then. Then he thought of it no more.

And on a night of a warm hissing rain, when the old man was waiting for the strangers of death and still another child, Daniel circled the forests and seas, meadows and mountains, walking and running and jumping and flying--anything, anything for life. And the next day, in this beautiful mystical land, he was gone. One called him a child that did not belong. Some said he lived still--in the voice of frogs and the beauty of papery Queen Anne's lace doilies, in the center of sundials and starfish, and in the air of yellow suns and striped rainbows. One called him God. The old man said he did not know. He did not know.

Mary Atwater

Awakening

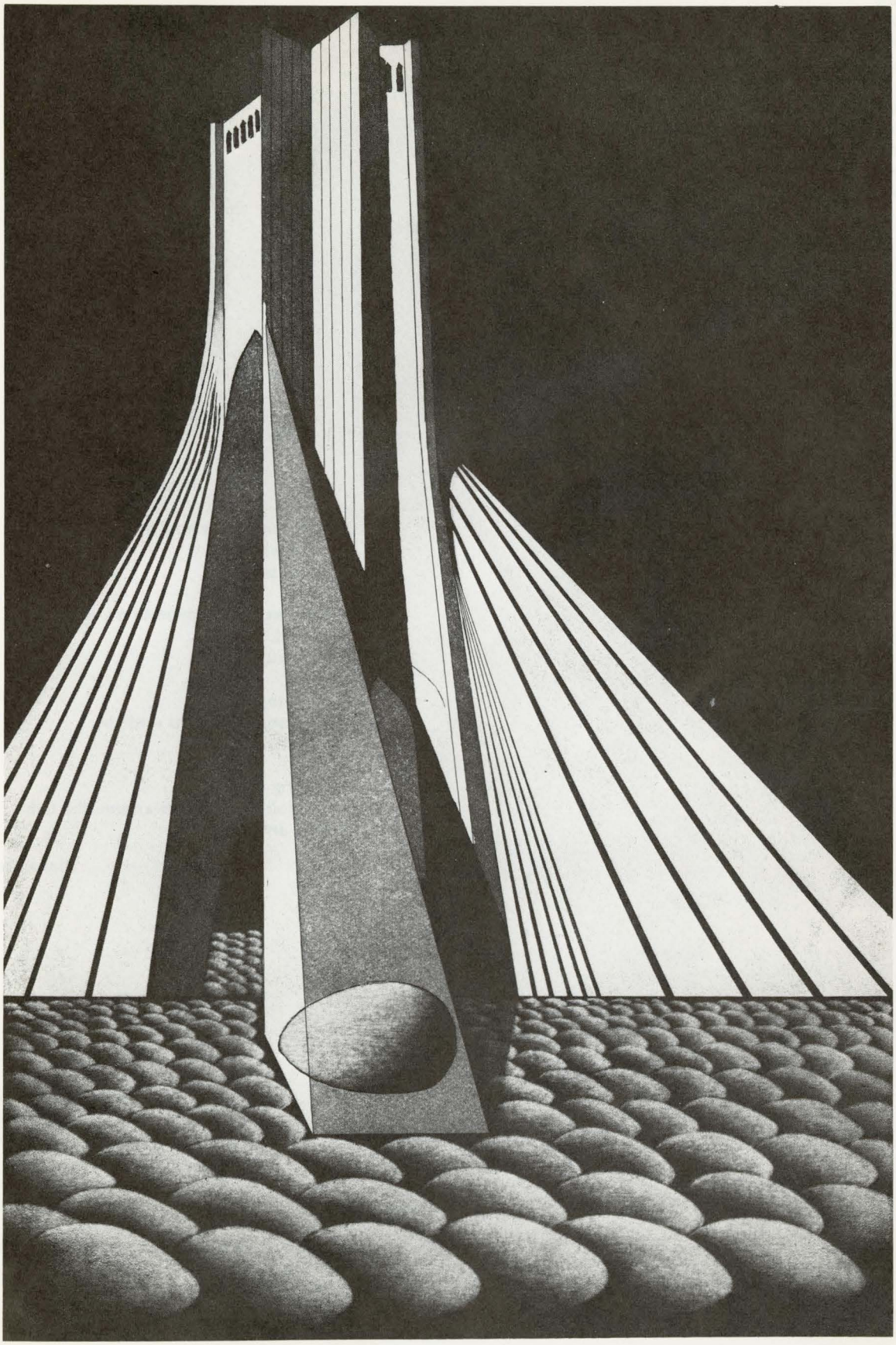
Let all
my lovers
into the
ballroom
I will dance
alone as
a chandelier
of hand
crafted
parts...
Who am I
Is
a
door
opened
or closed
on the
ecstasy
here...
No one came for
those answers
on shiny floors
mirrored walls
we all
came to
dance...

Karren L. Alenier

Coming to the other

Come
let's
write
these words
from our minds
can you
remember
how
to say
the first
sound
Da
Ma
DAMN
I said
Do you hear
fa
father
farther
further
fucker
the tongue
somersaults
with a love
of sound
can't you
come
to this
concert
to kiss
to comfort
to touch
cunt
and not
recoil
not close
your ears
or eyes
or mouth
I can
spell
these things
out
with
you
I want
to

Karren L. Alenier



I dream
I follow a man
down a moonless path
he hears me
turns
I strike a match
against my palm
I candle
his face
it is beautiful.

Diana Vance

Jesus

do you remember how Mary held you?
smooth white
& delicate

when I press your palm to my lips
dogwood blossoms
in my mouth.

cupped together
your hands must hold sunlight
like water

unfolding a flower
you unfold the blanket around the baby
in your arms.

Diana Vance

Burial

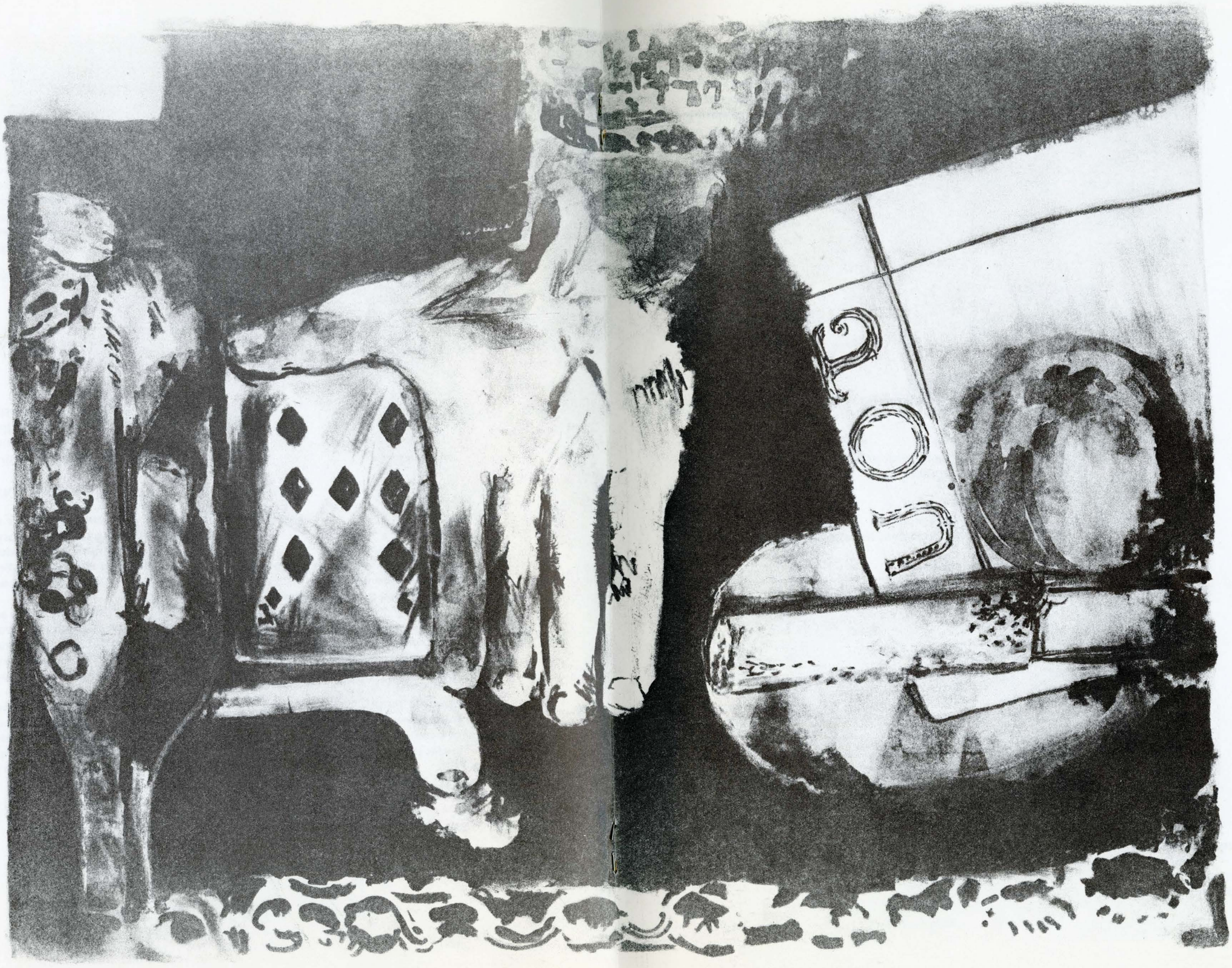
Because it is dark
the ants carry lanterns
into your ear.
Can you hear them singing
or is it the light
that keeps you
awake?

Diana Vance

Jesus

I'd love to brush your hair
to pull it away
from your head to gather the curls
in my hand
to kiss your neck
I pretend I am a man
& you the woman I love
for the infinite softness of your skin.

Diana Vance



Enigma Variation

Logician J.S. Mill,
down in the dumps at twenty,
springing for help to song,
frets that all the combinations of notes
will be used up.

Songwriter Tschaikovsky,
wrung with a lonely heart,
leaping to lead the band,
fears that his head will fall off while
he waves his stick.

Sweet Mary Singer,
eager to keep her husband
happy with her mouth,
disconcerts over the seven calories
in a spurt of sperm.

What, me worry?

[Only, perhaps, that once
this ink is dry, the letters
will let go, slide off the page and
miss your lips.]

G.A. Cate

Annunciation

Faster than a mother's sighs
or a father's throbs
my astonished wincing soul was
shot into flesh.

Hindermost I slid to birth
bellowing at that man
who cut my only remaining
link with the true.

Blinking then he held my heels
and struck me dumb.
Like Achilles, my grand call was
my last victory.

G.A. Cate

Revolutionary

What makes me so sad
is that when the yap
of hard news from TV
tips my tonnage to sleep
I remember
my five-pound cat
chasing a hound
up a tree.

G.A. Cate

THE NIGHT VISITOR

I awaken,
my confusion grating through the air
like chalk being rubbed the wrong way
on a piece of slate.
Tossing and turning like a freshly caught fish
on a dry dock at noon,
I try to return to a state of being,
and escape your attempt at suffocation.
Amid a mass of hot wet confusion,
I struggle desperately to find a compass.
You come to me at night
armed with your nets of insanity
and your silencers of irrationality.
You are the pimp who masquerades
as a social director, uniting me with
my inspiration, perspiration and fear.
You arrange darkened meetings with
the noise in the closet, the face in the jug,
and the thing under the bed.
I turn my pockets inside out
proving I have nothing left to give,
yet you want more.
You want that one last drop.
Turning the bottle over,
the last of the last emerges.
Not sweet, not clear, not flowing
like before.
It is cloudy now
and thick
and crystallizes upon reaching the brink.

KJW

Jogging

Run! downhill arms flying out
Sweatpants and tennis shoes,
Socks rolled down and hair in your armpits

Run! from the midget Bridgets
Make-up and bitch grins on
They promenade round the corner
Display their bodies in the doorway
And they're only thirteen.

Run! because the lady inside gazes
Through half-closed lids
Painted powder blue.
Run! like the kid who lived here before that lady moved in.

Gee I'm glad my figure's toning up
Belly's slimming down
Breasts pointing out.

Run! don't you hear those guys on the corner,
"Hey baby, is that all you can do?"
Run! they cannot tell you
And even she inside cannot tell you if you
Run!

Debra Shalowitz

THE VISITING POET

There you sit, soft flock of eyes,
brown grapes slouching on the tables
of the rich. My Autumn thoughts
scuttle toward you--some of you
scatter and never look back. Some
of you blink, still hovering.

I laugh as the leaves, those injured wings,
bury my legs, my body, my face.
Finally, only that one arm waves,

a serpent sailing to its lost continent,

a worm flirting in a giant nest.

Mary Ann McFadden

How My Garden Grows

I farm the concrete in my basement
where mushrooms squat
like muscular toads.

These mushrooms know no night, no day.
"Morning is here," I tell them.
I wait for their denial.
"Morning is here, the sky is blue,
the moist earth grows green fur."

"The sun shines," I hiss.

I set forth slugs for their pleasure.
I feed them black water.
They thrill with new-born spots.
They thrive, become lost limbs,
wear helmets,
ignore me.

I touch them with a nail,
to leave a soft impression.
"Night is here," I say.
"Everything decent sleeps."
Still, no answer.

And so I eye them,
wonder how it will end,
in whose soup.

Barbara Schulman

MACHINES OF WEATHER

The umbrella is
a black crow
hanging in my shower
feet up tied
to the towel rack

I brought him in
from weather
from the grey sky
plucked him
in a field
of flowers
with
cumuliform
heads
he rustles
and drips his ideas
to the drain

Jim Beall

A FUNERAL FOR ALLEN

FADE IN:
DAY. LONG SHOT OF A NUMBER OF PARKED CARS BUMPER TO BUMPER. EACH CAR HAS PASSENGERS AND IT IS OBVIOUSLY A FUNERAL PROCESSION. ABSOLUTELY NO SOUND. HOLD SHOT FOR A FEW SECONDS.
FADE OUT.

FADE IN:
DAY. THE BECK'S LIVING ROOM. FOCUS ON **MR. BECK** SEATED ON COUCH, LEGS PROPPED UP ON COFFEE TABLE, SMOKING A CIGARETTE AND SIPPING COFFEE. HE IS WEARING A T-SHIRT AND PAJAMA BOTTOMS. PULL BACK TO SHOW **MRS. BECK** ENTERING FROM HALLWAY. SHE IS WEARING A BATHROBE AND HAS ROLLERS IN HER HAIR.

MRS. BECK
I see you poured yourself some coffee.

BECK
Yeah.

MRS. BECK
Did you get me a cup?

BECK
I didn't know you wanted any.

MRS. BECK
Well, I'll get it myself. (SHE SHOUTS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE HALLWAY) John, wake up.
SHE WALKS TO THE KITCHEN. WE STAY WITH MR. BECK AND WATCH HIM PICK UP A NEWSPAPER AND READ. MRS. BECK. QUICKLY COMES BACK HOLDING A CUP OF COFFEE.

MRS. BECK
John, time to get up.
SHE SITS NEXT TO MR. BECK.

MRS. BECK
Well, you sure you don't want to come?

BECK
(STOPS READING) Where?

MRS. BECK
That boy's funeral.

BECK
(RESUMES READING) I've done told you I'm not going. I don't want to go to somebody's funeral if I don't know him.

MRS. BECK
You know him, honey. He's been in this house lots of times for John's parties.

BECK
(PUTS PAPER DOWN) I just don't remember him.
JOHN WALKS IN FROM HALLWAY IN PAJAMAS.

JOHN
Got any coffee?

MRS. BECK
There's a pot on in the kitchen.
JOHN FLOPS DOWN IN LIVING ROOM CHAIR. YAWNS.

MRS. BECK
You going to get a cup?

JOHN
Yeah, give me a chance to wake up.

MRS. BECK
We have to be going soon.

JOHN
I'm not sure I want to go.

MRS. BECK
Sure you're going. He was your friend wasn't he? I told Mike to come pick us up.

JOHN
My car is running now.

MRS. BECK
I know. But your sports car might not look too good, it being white and all.

BECK
You sure Mike wanted to go before you asked him to come pick you up? Just because he's your son-in-law...

MRS. BECK
Mike wants to go. Allen was his friend.

BECK
Just because he's your son-in-law is no reason to take advantage of him.

MRS. BECK
I told you, he wants to go.

BECK
Well, as long as he's wanting to.

MRS. BECK
Now, why don't you go, honey? You knew Allen.

BECK
I don't remember any Allen.

MRS. BECK
Maybe you remember his brother, he looks just like his brother. You remember that older boy used to come to the parties? The one had that real long hair you didn't like at first?

BECK
No... no.

MRS. BECK
The one who'd sit with you sometimes and talk about things? The real smart one?

BECK
Oh, yeah. Yeah. And he had a real thin moustache?

MRS. BECK
I don't remember any moustache. I guess maybe he had...

JOHN
Yeah, he had one.

BECK
Yeah, I remember him.

MRS. BECK
Well, Allen's his brother. Will you come with us now?

BECK
No honey, I don't want to go to no funeral.

JOHN
You fixing any breakfast, mom?

MRS. BECK
We don't have time, honey. We have to get ready.

JOHN
We've got better than an hour.

MRS. BECK

Well, I'm wondering if they'll have anything to eat afterwards. Maybe we shouldn't have any breakfast.

BECK

I want some breakfast.

MRS. BECK

(STANDS) Oh, honey, scramble some eggs. I've got to get ready.

SHE WALKS THROUGH THE HALLWAY. WE STAY IN THE LIVING ROOM.

JOHN

Whose coffee is that?

CLOSE UP OF COFFEE CUP ON COFFEE-TABLE. LONG SHOT OF LIVING ROOM.

BECK

Your mother's.

JOHN PICKS UP THE COFFEE.

JOHN

I'll fix her another one later.

BECK

See that you do.

A DOOR BELL IS HEARD.

BECK

Come in.

MIKE ENTERS AND WALKS TO LIVING ROOM. HE REMAINS STANDING, HANDS IN POCKET.

MIKE

How you doing, Mr. Beck? Hi, John.

JOHN

Hi, Mike.

BECK

Where's my daughter?

MIKE

She's getting ready, we'll pick her up on the way over. You're not ready yet John.

JOHN

I'm not sure I want to go.

MIKE

Sure you want to go. **Everybody** will be there.

MIKE SITS ON COUCH, STRETCHES HIS ARMS

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

DAY. MEDIUM SHOT OF A NUMBER OF PARKED CARS BUMPER TO BUMPER. IT IS THE FUNERAL PROCESSION. ABSOLUTELY NO SOUND. HOLD SHOT FOR A FEW SECONDS.

FADE OUT.

MIKE

God, I couldn't believe it when he died. Can you imagine that? We'll never see Allen again. Somebody that we used to talk to, kid around with, we'll never see him again. It's kind of hard to believe, isn't it?

BECK

That's what dying is all about.

MIKE

Yeah, but I mean somebody that we actually knew. Did you hear about how he died?

BECK

Car wreck, wasn't it?

MIKE

Yeah, but do you know the details?

BECK

Just a car wreck.

MIKE

Do you, John?

JOHN

No.

MIKE

He had just finished fixing the brakes on his car and his mother told him that dinner was ready. He said, "Okay, I'll be there in five minutes." He told her he was going to take the car once around the block and she never say him again. Alive. Did you see the car after the wreck, John?

JOHN

No.

MIKE

I saw it. I got sick just looking at that thing. You know how they scrap metal into cubes? It was about that size after the wreck. It was no bigger than this coffee table here. That'll give you an idea of how bad it was.

JOHN

He didn't die right away.

MIKE

I know, but he never regained consciousness. They say that if he had lived he'd just be a vegetable. He had too much brain damage and he wouldn't have had any legs so I think he was lucky to die.

BECK

Yeah, he's better off dead.

MIKE

If he lived he'd just be a fantastic expense on his family and besides, he wouldn't be the same Allen. He's just be a vegetable, nobody can love a vegetable.

BECK

He's better off dead. You see the game yesterday, Mike?

MIKE

Wasn't that sickening? That game really upset me. The officials didn't make one right call.

BECK

The hell you say? That was a perfectly called game, just because your team lost...

MIKE

No, I don't care who wins if the game is played fairly but that was the worst called game I have ever seen in my life!

BECK

Come off it! Your man wasn't hitting any baskets. He scored six points I think. Out of what? About thirteen or fourteen shots? What's that, about twenty percent?

MIKE

He scored ten points and hit better than thirty percent.

CLOSE UP OF JOHN LISTENING WITH APPARENT DISBELIEF.

BECK

So what? He usually hits in the thirties, doesn't he?

MIKE

Yeah, but the rest of the team...

BECK

There is no rest of the team! He is the team and they lost because he wasn't hitting.

MIKE

No, that was a bad called game, the poorest called game I have ever seen.

BECK

Everytime your team loses it's a bad called game.

MIKE

You say that too.

BECK

That's not why your team lost last night. A good team can't depend on one man. A good team has five players. Your team doesn't, they depend too much on one man and

everytime he's off, they lose. I've told you that a hundred times.
MRS. BECK WALKS IN FROM HALLWAY. HER HAIR IS DOWN BUT SHE IS STILL DRESSED IN ROBE AND SHE CARRIES A BLACK DRESS.

MRS. BECK

Hi, Mike, I'll be ready in just a couple of minutes.

MIKE

Okay, we've still got an hour.

MRS. BECK

Had a heck of a time trying to find a good dress. We must've shopped for over two hours. It is appropriate, isn't it?

BECK

It's fine, honey.

MRS. BECK

Fix you a cup of coffee, Mike.

MIKE

No, no thanks, I just had a cup.

MRS. BECK

You better get dressed, John. I'll be right out Mike, just got to slip this dress on.
SHE WALKS THROUGH HALLWAY. JOHN FINISHES COFFEE AND SETS CUP ON COFFEE-TABLE.

MIKE

Have you been over to see Allen's parents, John?

JOHN

No, no, I haven't.

MIKE

I haven't either. God, I don't know what I'd say. I wanted to, my Mom said for me to go, but God, what can you say?

JOHN

That would be difficult.

MIKE

Yeah, I don't think any of the guys have been over yet.

BECK

Somebody should pay their respects.

MIKE

Well, we're all going to the funeral. Everybody will be there. I can't get over it. Five minutes he told his mother. Five minutes. And just like that, he died. I find that remarkable to believe. Can you imagine? In just five minutes.
MRS. BECK WALKS BACK IN.

MRS. BECK

You'd better hurry up and get dressed, John.

JOHN

I'm not going.

MRS. BECK

Sure you're going. Come on, now.

JOHN

No, I'm not going.

MIKE

You sure?

JOHN

I'm sure.

MRS. BECK

Oh, now, don't start acting up.

BECK

Leave the boy make up his own mind. He don't want to go, that's it. Don't force him, honey.

MRS. BECK

I wasn't forcing.....

BECK

You were too forcing. Now he's done said he don't want to go.
CLOSE UP OF MRS. BECK WHO APPEARS UPSET. SHE LOOKS AT THE COFFEE TABLE AND NOTICES HER EMPTY CUP.

MRS. BECK

What happened to my coffee?

JOHN

Oh, I drank it. Let me fix you a cup.

MRS. BECK

(HARSHLY) Never mind.

MIKE

(STANDS) We'd better be going then.

MRS. BECK

Let's go.

MIKE

Everybody is going to be at this funeral. You still got time, John.

JOHN

No.

MIKE

Okay. Let's go.
MRS. BECK KISSES HER HUSBAND.

MRS. BECK

See you in a while, honey. Scramble you some eggs or get John to. And, John, take out the garbage.

JOHN

Yeah.

MRS. BECK

That's what you said yesterday, now make him take it out, honey.

BECK

He'll take it out.

MRS. BECK

Okay, see you in a while.

MIKE

See you later, Mr. Beck. Bye, John.

BECK

Drive carefully.
CLOSE UP OF JOHN'S FACE. TRANCE LIKE.
FADE OUT.
FADE IN:
DAY. MEDIUM SHOT OF THE FUNERAL PROCESSION. STILL NO SOUND. ZOOM IN TO THE LEAD CAR, A HEARSE. IT HAS SMALL SKULLS DANGLING ALL OVER THE BODY.
CUT TO - LARGE SIGN ON BACK OF HEARSE "JUST DIED."
ZOOM OUT TO MEDIUM SHOT OF PROCESSION. A SUDDEN EXPLOSION OF HORNS SOUNDING AND THE PROCESSION IS UNDERWAY.
FADE OUT.
FADE IN:
DAY. BECK'S LIVING ROOM. CLOSE UP OF JOHN'S FACE. TRANCE LIKE.

BECK

Turn on the TV, will you, John.
NO RESPONSE FROM JOHN.

BECK

(LOUDER) Turn on the TV, John.

JOHN

What?

BECK

Turn on the TV.
JOHN WALKS TO TV SET.
FADE OUT.

Phil Enkiri

REALIZATION

There's no end to
deliverance.
Midwife to ourselves
we play the other.
Bored, we watch the
dock sink
unaware of who is
sitting on it
and as the water
rises
to our eyes
we think
Goddamn it,
I should have known.

Who else could it have been.

Don LeMond

Sonnet

Some comfort the nothingness with jeers
and some with worship; think it is god;
They play with masks of laughter and tears,
a false pageantry within their living sod.

Some have the noble gestures of despair,
some will shoot and draw fierce swords.
They think they must face the attitude they wear,
the smart accoutrements of flimsy lords.

All gestures, all; all tiny shadows seen against
the empty clearness of night,
Or proud or pitiful across the screen
of heartless day they pass in hasty flight.

Nothing remains---no swords, dust or dance,
not even silence and not even chance.

Don LeMond

Germany, WWII [for William Heyen]

Smoke
from jagged
burning bones
still struggles
like a blighted offering
to the Father of Abel,
same Father of Cain.

But it cannot be said this way.
It cannot be said, to you, this way.
The slayer
cannot be slain,
and the mark
hangs over his head
like that same ghostly Father
that taunts men
to a sacrificial fire.

Patrice M. Wilson

NEFERTARI

stone by stone
I built this palace
for you and me,
alone at the last

triangular window
I watch a granite
sky where birds
flee the grinding wind.

you brown your
hard body now
with Mediterranean
sun. past my

sliver of window here
trees rock and
grain bends like slaves
at the crack

of rain, the river
rises from her tomb
and a mountain
rolls on the plain.

one diamond of light
burns in my room then
the last brick fits
tight.

James Maher

Reeds

You will make a good whistle
Your thin high pitch
may be the wheeze
heard round the world

a breeze
that blows from the marshes
the cries of peepers
amid the rush of the rise of flamingos

Where the lion growls
at the throat of an antelope
& the Great Ape swings unmolested
you simply waver

matted with mudnests of thrushes
made with sticks
and small strands of hair
No one hears you

except at night
when the roar
is muted by the shrill piping
of the wind blowing through the rushes.

Joe Brennan

ANALOGY

I like my shower soft...
like me.

And this dude asked me
why,
I always wrote about myself.
But you know,
men are like showers,
you can turn them
up
or
down, soft or hard.

Sometimes I like hard showers.

Peggy Burress

MANDINGO

Black seed spreadin' through my supple thighs
making me sigh and ache with sweet pain.
A strong black rod from a man who could make a
plantation thrive, like I'm thrivin'.
Black seed slidin' through my system bring back
remembrances of love given and received by the Black
Lord.
Black seed raisin' the jubilant song of my soul
to a peak of exertion,
making me want to give all the more.
Black seed makin' fine black buck to raise others,
for evolution after evolution.
Black seed penetratin' my whole body
making me sigh and ache with sweet, hot moist,
sensuous feeling of knowing
I am the black woman.

Peggy Burress

Approaching Winter

They weigh down the swans with metal bands
around their necks. Now they push through
the darkening water unable to fly
from approaching winter.

We have lost our home in the city.
We know how they move back past the warehouse
and past Orchard Street
where the last row of townhouses
faces a meadow dump littered with car parts.

We sit behind our black windows.
My chair is of summer wicker.
I cannot move it creaks so. Blonde wicker
washed by a lighter season of warmth and sun.
The hemp seat is frayed.
I pick at its broken fibers.

All night we try to rest
dumped in a summer cottage
hastily prepared for our winter home.
While outside people convoy past us
to the city.

When daylight strikes the black windows
it is finally quiet. The weighted swans
pull out on the dark lake
like clouds in a dark mirror.
The morning is indifferent bright
as after death.

Glassy eyed, looking blind and fugitive
from a sleepless night --
caught, I twist my head from side to side.
Clouds run across the sky.
I stand on the road where it ends
at the black and yellow crosses
that barricade the paling fields beyond.

Prudence Barry

THURSDAY WITH SHANAHAN

"Son, I'll see you in a week then, O.K.?"

I looked up from my newspaper. "Yeah, O.K. Dad. Take care."

"Right. You take car of your mother."

"Right."

The old man was going to Washington D.C. for one week. He was the Second Deputy Superintendent of the Chicago Police Dept., and he was representing the department at a conference sponsored by the Attorney General. He liked to get away. Since he was now in an administrative position he was confined to the office. He missed the street. The political nature of the top echelon discouraged him, too. I was glad to see him going to Washington.

I finished reading the Tribune editorial endorsing the mayor for re-election. It was the fifth time they had endorsed him. Some things did not change. Well, the mayor kept the city working, something other mayors could not do. As a matter of fact the city was in damn decent shape for its size. The wind blew and its warmth felt good. I looked down onto the backyard and could see some early sprouts in our garden. It was going to come in early this year. I finished my coffee and went into my bedroom, closing the white doors behind me.

I had been picking out weeds for about an hour when I heard Dick's voice.

"The-r-r-e he is!"

"Hey-y guy. Top of the morning." I turned and saw him in his bedroom window. I could visualize him kneeling on their king size bed; his son Chris probably had awoken him. Sure enough Christopher appeared under Dick's arms.

"Hey Sha-han. You dad put you in jail." Dick laughed.

I leaped back in mock amazement. "Oh my God. Did he really?"

"Yeah."

"What am I gonna do about it, Chris?"

He shrugged his shoulders. He looked at Dick. Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"I don' know."

Dick picked him up and must have hugged him. I could hear Chris running away squealing with joy. Dick reappeared.

"Hey look Farmer Jones, I'll be ready in about ten minutes."

"Check."

We were on the Kennedy Expressway heading out of the city towards Palatine. I poured each of us a cup of coffee and passed one to Dick.

"Ah--h-h. That's the greatest. Hey, I'll tell ya' guy. With the amount of time you put into Ma's garden we ought to consider expanding into a lawn and garden service."

I chuckled.

"No, really. I'm sure there's a market what with all the high rollers around here. First we could start out with just a weekly garden service for a few residential homes and then slowly move on to office complexes, condominiums-----"

"I don't know. It's just a special pastime. Kind of a sanctuary, not any business preparation."

"Why not? Christ, in two or three years you could completely take it over as a franchise and the bucks would really flow for you, then."

"Maybe. It's possible."

"Yeah. Think about it."

By the time we reached the townhouses we were going to be cleaning it was eleven o'clock and the sun was high and shining. There was definitely going to be an early summer. That was unusual for the midwest. With an early summer the plainsmen just might escape the tornadoes. Chicago wasn't in Tornado Alley so we always had escaped the destruction.

The contractor had told us the townhouses were going to be dirty but that was an understatement. They had been built in a low spot adjacent to a large creek, and they were flooded. The water was a foot deep and the bottom two inches were pure mud. It was a mess and the price was going to be high to clean it up. After four hours we finally had all the water drained and the mud mopped. We used a pine-odored hot rinse to try to dissipate the smell. We tried for about an hour but it was going to be a permanent fixture for quite some time. It was there for now, so we said the hell with it.

We had stopped to pick up a few Italian beef sandwiches and two quarts of beer and were sitting in a forest preserve about a mile from where we lived. We fought traffic all the way back to town and it was nice to lay back against a tree and drink beer. We sat for about a half hour after we finished eating, smoking cigarettes and drinking beer. We were a little taken in by both our earlier exertion and the surprise of early spring. Finally Dick spoke.

"Before we left this morning I got a call from Cordis."

"Problems on Belmont Ave.?"

He nodded his head affirmatively. "I think Frank is at the end of the line. He's been taking more sick days, asking for advance pay; we get more calls from Cordis and he's just generally slipping."

"Might be temporary. He might need a little scare."

"Nope. He's through. I could see it coming a few months ago. It's been progressively worse. We can't afford to lose that account. He's gotta go. I want you to give him his two weeks notice tonight."

"Tonight? What do we have listed for tonight?"

"We'll find something to do. Come on. Let's go home. Mary and your mom probably have our dinners on the

table."

I was quiet at dinner with my mother. As she cleaned the dishes I had a cigarette with my coffee. I wondered how Frank was going to feel when a young guy two years out of college told him he wasn't capable of being a janitor anymore. Five years ago he was the best Dick had. He was a sixty-two year old Polish immigrant and I had notcied he was talking more and more about the old country. Maybe he would go back now.

"Adios amigo."

"Aeos ameo."

Dick laughed as he started the car, waving to Chris. "Little sunshine Chris." He laughed and waved again as we drove off. "Rick, he'll fight, scream, and cry; not Chris. It's all wonderful to him."

"So what's the game plan?" Supposedly we were to make equipment deliveries tonight, but the game plan inevitably changed each night.

"Well, I'll tell ya' guy---"

"Just tell me the part where you go to Ann's."

Dick laughed. "That happens right now."

"Oh Jesus."

Dick turned down the radio so that I could hear what we were going to do tonight. We usually planned joint ventures and wound up at different places; usually it wound up with me working and Dick at Ann's.

"First we'll drive to Ann's. Then you'll take the car, stop in Schnadig and pick up a buff-pad and machine. Then go over to Beardsly and you and Art spray-buff your brains out on the white floor area. Then come back to Ann's about ten thirty-eleven o'clock and we'll still be able to suck up some suds at Dave's." He laughed and looked over at me. "We gotta get time in for Dave's."

The equipment in Dick's stationwagon rattled as we drove over some chuckholes on Caldwell Ave. I was becoming irritated at Dick's neglect of the business. I was tired of making decisions for him in his absence, and later having those decisions countermanded. He drove home organization to me in all of our talks, but his practice was haphazard.

"Is Ann still sick?"

"Yeah. Her mother is in town from Tennessee. I've never met her."

He never met her mother. Christ. I wonder if he had ever really met his own wife. "What the hell do you want to meet her mother for?"

"Because she's the only one in the family I've never met. What's wrong with that?"

"You know, it's funny how sometimes sex can manipulate a guy's brain processes such that he's no longer capable of thinking straight."

He was pissed off now. "Look, she's being kept in style at the moment. I think she's a realist enough to know that if she starts to consider me in those terms she better get used to the idea of a cold water flat."

I lit a cigarette. It was time to unload some of the big guns I had been storing up for him. "Well, if the shit ever hits the fan and Mary starts finding out where Dikla is late at night, and she starts calling her lawyer and Dikla Building Services goes down the drain in a divorce settlement, it will be absolutely no sweat off my back. None. But what happens to Richard J. Lah then?"

We were at Ann's house and Dick stepped on the parking brake. "You're talking about the wrong boy." He smiled as he opened the car door and said, "See ya' about eleven."

Schnadig International Furniture is located on Belmont and Cicero Avenues. It is the largest furniture complex under one roof in the country. It is also one of our biggest accounts.

After the machine and drive head were in the car, I walked back into Schnadig to see if Frank was there yet. I didn't see him so I walked into the cafeteria and made some coffee. Frank Szalagi was one of a hundred immigrant Polish we employed. They worked hard, the Polskis. The problem was, half of them we were barely able to communicate with. Compounded with this language barrier was their Polish Mafia leader, Stevie. Stevie Smuda was a young immigrant who was akin to a personnel director for all of our Polskis. When we needed a body at a building, we called Stevie. We never knew what his exact economic relationship was with these people but he obviously received some kind of kickback. Come to think of it, it wasn't a bad deal for everybody concerned. Stevie get job for uncle, uncle pay Stevie few bucks every week, and bossmen be happy. Remarkable. Exploitation. That little shit Polack. Frank Szalagi suddenly stood in front of me, smiling and eating popcorn out of a box.

"Frank, what goes on?"

"I be at movie, Harlem Ave."

"Really. What was there?"

"I see Dirty Harry."

"Dirty Harry, huh?"

"Yeah, Dirty Harry. Goddamn guy kill everyone. No cop here do that, I tell you boss."

"No. It's all Hollywood."

"Right. No be true."

"Look, Frank?"

Frank was engulfed in the process of putting his six pack of beer in the refrigerator. His trouble was that the refrigerator was totally full. He looked up. "Goddamn no room." Finally he shoved it in and closed the door, glad to be rid of this annoyance.

"Frank, Cordis call today."

Frank only knew one name at Schnadig: Wayne Cordis. He knew Cordis, the comptroller, was the Big Boss as far as our activities at Schnadig were concerned, and when we mentioned the name of Wayne Cordis, Frank listened hard.

"What this son-of-bitch want now?"

"He says no good floor sweep."

Frank look away disgusted, waving his hand at me, denying the accusation. I went on.

"Frank, come on. Follow me."

We walked into the Accounting Dept. and I pulled out a few chairs from desks until I found what I was looking for. Paper clips and discarded staples were piled against a steel telephone cable. Frank looked dubiously until he saw what I was pointing at.

"See. See what I mean."

Frank stood looking, closer now, probably wondering how these office supplies got there; maybe wondering with whom the blame really lay.

"We have to pull out chairs when we sweep, Frank. Pull out chair, pick up basket, sweep everywhere." I was picking up wastebaskets, moving chairs and copying machines to show him what I was talking about; I remembered what I was here for. Frank had gone back to the janitor's closet and I went to the cafeteria to retrieve my clipboard and keys. I passed by the closet on my way out.

"Frank."

"Yo' boss."

"Do you know anything about gardening?"

"Garden?"

"Yeah, you know; plant flowers, cut grass, trim bushes."

"Goddamn, I work farm twenty year near Cracow."

"You did? Great. Listen, would you want to work for us outside?"

"Where?"

"I don't know yet." He looked down at the floor, then back at me.

"Same money?"

"Maybe more." He looked down at the floor again. "Look Frank, I'll talk to you next week. You think about it."

"O.K. boss, I think."

Rain had been coming down while I was in Schnadig. It was as warm as the day's sun, and it felt good. The street punks and their wheels were out in force; they were going to celebrate tonight. The overhead electric lines crackled; I waited for the bus to pass so I could swiftly open the car door and jump in before a following pair of headlights could take the door and me off the street. I made it in safely and waited for the traffic to pass. Two weeks to get a business off the ground was not much time.

Luckily the shipping gate at Beardsly and Piper was open and I was able to drive into the receiving area. The foundry had been operating around the clock since Beardsly signed a multi-million dollar contract with the Russians. This was good new to us. A customer is always in a more receptive mood toward a rate increase if his earnings are high. Their capital expenditures had been enormous in the preceding two years, as a result our negotiations with them over increased services had been extremely rigorous. The bastards just plain refused to compromise. Without a doubt our service in this building had been nothing short of excellent, and it was time for hard work to pay off.

The factory area covered a few acres and was crammed with machinery. The basic idea I had deciphered was that the company made machinery that would make other machines, mostly agricultural in nature. I often thought it funny how I had graduated from college a business management major and could pick a statement of financial position paper apart, yet not be able to know what the products the company sold were used for. I rationalize my stupidity as "necessary specilaization of decision making."

Before I walked into the hallway leading to the office section I saw Galaso Hinojosa and we exchanged greetings. He was a remarkable Mexican. Out of the corner of my eye though, I saw Teddy, the fat straw boss approaching so I let it go with Galaso. I would see him before I left.

I had been grinding away spray buffing for nearly two hours before I realized that Art Weston hadn't shown up. Dick had talked to him earlier in the day. I always felt some sort of tension between myself and Art. After I had graduated a few years ago, the assistant manager position had arose in Dick's company. It was obviously between Art and myself, and it went to me. I was surprised Art was still working with us. He must need that money. His age was what had killed his chance. He was thirty-three. He had possibly ten good years of physical durability left in him. I had twenty. Of course, there was Scotty, our head man at Roycemore School. He was a year younger than I was. Scotty was mostly talk, though. Most of the time he didn't know what he was talking about. Scotty just couldn't cut it with the honchos of our accounts.

As I left the foundry I hunted out Galaso and found him boring out castings, for what purpose only he knew. Our conversations usually centered on the finer points of language. He had been trying in vain to improve the fluency of my Spanish. He was a remarkable man. He was a happy person. He enjoyed people and he had no problems with sincerity. We fell into discussing Mexico's attempts to industrialize itself and his good natured jabs at his own people showed a humility that I was in awe of.

"You know, the people of Mexico have one blockade which they must overcome."

"What's that?"

"They are very lazy."

His laugh and brilliant smile made me treasure this guy. After he had traversed the subject of "implementing sophisticated technology" into Mexico's economy, Galaso's friend Lagrez came by and said something to him in Spanish. Lagrez had been working at B and P over two years. In all that time I had never heard him speak a word of English. After a few lewd gestures I understood what Lagrez was talking about. I laughed and he accepted my token of friendship and went off shouting incomprehensibly. Galaso turned and said, "You see, he talks about these things because he knows about nothing else."

I smiled.

"No. No, this is very sad."

"Maybe."

We both felt the atmosphere getting cumbersome and Galaso, to our relief, unloaded what he was famous for; his imagination. I have only lived twenty-three years but even if I live fifty more I do not believe I will ever know any individual who vocalizes more incredibly strange images than does Galaso Hinojosa. It began with a comment about the intolerable humidity of the air inside the factory. I did not hear everything he said but this I did catch.

"You see, the air becomes very top heavy and crap starts falling from the ceiling and you are like one of these logrollers, you know, shoveling shit." His everpresent laugh followed and I walked away shaking my head. Unreal. Shit-shoveling logrollers! Jesus Christ.

As I turned off Wilson Ave. onto the Edens-Milwaukee Expressway I was fumbling with the radio dial and hit upon something I recognized. It was Silver Hands, Manitas de Platas, the flamenco guitarist. After graduation I had, as some college graduates do, embarked upon my ***"Wanderjahr."*** This is where you go someplace you've never been before and most likely will never be again. I had gone to Spain. I had always been amazed by the speed and savageness of the flamenco guitarists, and I wanted to see them as they truly are. After a few weeks of hanging out at cafes in Madrid I found out that the master of them all, Manitas de Platas, lived in Arles, a century old Gypsy encampment in southern France. I bought an ancient German motorcycle in Madrid and headed out to Arles. Apparently the word was out that Manitas resided there; to my complete surprise I ran into a few Americans. The Gypsys were sustaining themselves now on those who came to see Manitas. The list was impressive. It even included Pablo Picasso at one time.

Manitas was in Paris the day I arrived in Arles, but he returned a few days later. It was a Friday night that I saw him play. God, what a night. He wore a plain white shirt with a worn black vest, but it was his face, the lines and contours of his face, that distinguished him. It was that other-worldliness that I once tried to explain to Dick, at which I'm sure he knew nothing of what I was talking about. I, as all the foreigners, came to discover how the technical complexities of flamenco guitar were actually performed. We left not caring. All the reviews in every newspaper, on every liner note, in any guitar book, are worthless. To see Manitas de Platas was something not to be explained, only

remembered. Le Guitarrista.

The piece on the radio ended. I turned the radio off. The Peterson-Caldwell Ave. exit was coming up.

It was raining and I rang the bell. Ann opened the door. She was in her bathrobe.

"Mister Shanahan!"

"Hello Ann."

"Your partner has been wondering where you were. Come on. Come on in out of the rain."

"Thanks." As we walked back to a den area I took notice of the house. It was a well built Georgian brick of which there are thousands on the the north side of the city. The living room was lavishly decorated. The kitchen had been modernized. As I walked into the den I was aware of the heavy odor of marijuana. Dick was slumped back in a black leather couch, a bottle of beer in his hands and three empties on the lamp table beside him. I sat down. I looked over at Dick.

"What's happening there guy?"

He looked at me and we both laughed. He seemed to be somewhat relieved I had arrived. I wondered if Anne had been making what Dick once termed "strange noises about divorce and remarriage." As I recounted the night's events to Dick, Ann continually interrupted with simpering complaints about her supposed illness. It seemed that Anne was always ill. It didn't put any damper on her sexual drive, though. Dick had told me about their experience while Ann was in the hospital. Right in the hospital. When I reached the episode with Galsao, Dick was in hysterics.

"Those shit-shovelin' logrollers will do it every time."

After a half-hour of watching television the three of us were all too aware of our boredom. When Dick mentioned the idea of going to Dave's, Anne made a recovery that would have dumbfounded any medical doctor. Soon she was dressed and calling her sister Wanda. Dave's Lounge was a neighborhood bar that Dick and I spent quite some time in. I was surprised that he was taking this chance, since we were well known at Dave's.

Wanda had a tight lipped smile which she wore without interruption. She never looked at a person when she spoke, except for her sister. She emulated Ann, thought she could be as liberated as she imagined Ann to be. The problem was that Wanda did not have a sugar daddy to support her liberation. Both girls had jobs at a bank downtown. The bank president provided Ann with a good job, a late model car, and generally a very comfortable existence. It probably does not require any deep insight to conclude what the bank president received in return. In contrast, Wanda had to rely on her dead husband's pension.

We waited for Wanda and I drank a few tequila limes.

The rain had turned to dense fog by the time we were ready to go. I drove the car and Wanda sat in the front with me. It was a shame. She was attractive yet it was impossible to converse with her. I could hardly see a goddamn thing, the fog was so thick. A half pint of rum was going around and I took a big drink when it came my way. It was hot and it shook me. We got on to Elston Ave. and could not find a parking space, so we parked in the alley behind the bar.

As the four of us sat down at the bar Dave stopped his conversation with a customer and came to set us up.

"Hello boys."

Dick and I returned the greeting. I don't know if Dave had played much cards in his sixty-four years, but if he had he was not as good a card player as he was a pool shooter; his eyes had glanced. It was a three second glance but I knew what he thought. He knew Dick was married. He knew I was twenty-three and that Wanda was at least thrity-five. He thought this whole thing had a rank odor. Dave's political and philosophical outlook was about twenty miles to the right of John Birch.

I did my best to engage Wanda in conversation and I was surprised to find she lived in Edison Park. It was a distinct burrough of which there are many in Chicago. Edison Park's distinction was its overabundance of city policemen residing there. Wanda had heard of my father, that a few of the policemen she knew had remarked that if he hadn't suffered a heart attack he would now be the Superintendent-in-Chief. I told her that I doubt if he would have been appointed regardless of his heart attack. He was not politically heavy and there were not too many jobs in this city that were as tied to city hall as the Superintendent of Police was. She was talking about how she had good friends in the 45th Democratic Ward Organization but I wasn't listening anymore because I saw that Marty was putting his stick together. There are a number of reasons we frequented Dave's as often as we did, but one of the main reasons was the pool table. It occupied about one quarter of the whole room and it was a marvel of craftsmanship. It had a solid oak base with maple siding. Its blue felt playing area was one of the best grades available. David, of course, took immense pride in this table. He denied access to it to those who were obviously in their cups.

Pool shooters from all over the north side came to play here. Most rarely came back because of David's golden rule. There was no gambling allowed. Games could be shot for drinks but there could be no exchange of money. The real affeciandos always came back though, the ones who treasured the game for what it was, a matter skill. Marty and Webb were two of these people and they were here this particular night. We usually teamed up against Marty and Webb; tonight would be no different. They had a slight edge in ability, but our enthusiasm made it an even match. Marty was somewhat short on intelligence; he drove a truck for a pinball and cigarette machine concern known as Apex, and reputedly owned by La Cosa Nostra. He was quite proud of his association with this company. Webb was an interesting person. He drove a bus for Greyhound within the Midwest. Why he did it I could not understand. He was approximately forty years old, his wife was around sixty. She was a woman of enormous means. Webb stood about six feet tall and weighed over two hundred pounds. He swaggered around with a rock hard Italian cigar in his mouth and he had a repetitive laugh that never died. He spoke with a quickness that made it hard to understand him, and always with a comic, dumb amazement. He took nothing seriously. He had a style of his own. He sat with his wife contentedly and played pool. Whether he won or lost didn't matter to him. This was probably due to the fact that he was a professional pool shooter for all practical purposes. His shot was hard and always true; it meant defeat for most of his opponents. Together he and Marty were awesome.

Dick was a deliberate player who took the game seriously. He wanted to win with a vengeance. I was the variable. When I was bad, well, we lost. If I was hot not even Webb could beat me.

Marty broke the first rack and no one else got a shot. He cleared the table. We were picked apart as a biologist would disect a frog. The second game we would probably have lost also, if not for Webb scratching the cue ball on shooting the eight. It was one-to-one and Dave was calling for the last game. The bar closed at two o'clock. Only a few people

remained. These people stayed because they knew the tension. Even the girls, whom I had completely forgotten about, were quiet. Conversation was dead. About the only noise was the juke box. Dick broke the last rack and opened with a three ball run, which was good. All we needed was five more, just five more and we would win. Then it happened. Webb ran six balls. He was having hard luck all night and now it came together for him. He left me tough for my shot. The cue was at the opposite end of the table from my only available shot, and the distance seemed like a football field. My object ball had to be cut hard right to the corner pocket. It was a difficult shot but it went. Four more. The next shot was a sitting duck Dick had lined up and that was easy enough; only three were left now. The two ball was on the opposite rail and it had to be walked down. I shot it too hard; it bounced within the points of the pocket and sat there. Shit. I sat down. Dick and I exchanged glances. If that had fallen the last two balls were in good position. We could have won. I bought Wanda a stinger. She remakred that is was a close game.

"It's not a game, Wanda."

"No. That's too bad, too."

Marty missed a long bank shot, Dick put one of ours in and left our last ball within easy reach of a side pocket. But Dick had made one bad mistake. He inadvertently hit the eight ball and now it sat dead on a rail between two pockets. Webb put their sole ball away and now he was shooting at the eight. He missed it. He completely missed it. The white ball never touched the eight. He walked back to his wife, cigar in mouth, his face in dumb amazement.

"How did I do that?"

He laughed and I walked to the table. He had made a stupid error but had done me no favors. The cue ball was about an inch off the opposite rail from the eight. It was a bank shot, back to me in the side pocket. Just as I had decided on this action one single, clear word rung out from behind the bar.

"Scratch."

It was David. It was David and bless that old bastard because he was right. One quick look told me the cue ball would indeed scratch in the left corner pocket. It would have to be a bank to the right corner pocket. Its chances were one in one thousand. I hit the pocket I was calling with my stick and David was saying, "Aw no. Nope. No way. No way in hell."

Dick had extinguished his cigarette and his jaw was in his hand. There was nothing he could do now. If I missed, the eight would surely be in easy reach of the pocket, and Marty gave no second chances. If I missed we would lose. I shot and it felt too soft. The cue hit the eight and it banked off the rail with a full rotating spin. It was spinning like mad toward the pocket. It hung on the edge for a half second and it was gone, only the blue felt remained. The girls went nuts and Dick was walking around screaming, "He did it. My partner done it. Yeah!" David threw his wet rag at me and hit me in the face. He brought our four beers for us, laughing and shaking his head. Marty put on his coat and dismantled his stick. It hurt. Webb had been staring at me and he turned to his wife, tilted his head, and said,

"How did he do that?"

I awoke and saw only blackness. I remembered where I was and looked over at Wanda. I could see the reflection in her eyes.

"You're awake. Why?"

"I slept for a few hours. I was just thinking about my sister."

"Ann? I get the impression Ann can take care of herself."

"Can Dick take care of himself?"

I was stretching my arms and I laughed in the middle of a yawn.

"Don't worry about Dick."

"His wife is an alcoholic, isn't she?"

I lay back a few moments, staring into the darkness of her room.

"Listen. You know that situation from Ann's point of view. I know it from Dick's. I think we should rejoice in our ignorance."

"No. You're not ignorant. You're part of it, Robert. As a matter of fact, I think you're the player that makes his whole game work. Without you he'd really be stuck."

"Yeah. I know that, but he needs me."

"You can help him. You can help yourself, too."

"I can't help him, Wanda. He's a walking myth and he loves every minute of it. I just hope he can hold on to everything until he realizes how absurd it really is. And about me; I'll get out soon." I smiled to myself. "I can see it coming."

She dropped me off at my house about eight o'clock. My mother had already left for work. There would be no one home. I could catch a few hours sleep before Dick and I met in the office section of his house for our Friday morning conference. I walked around the garage into the backyard. A big maple tree sat in the middle of the patio and I thought how this year I would finally dig a few inches deep around it and fill it with small white stones. Hopefully the bushes straddling Dick's fence would come in just as nice as they did last year. Who knows, I might even get a chance to grade the grass early enough and seed it.

When I opened the rear door leading into the kitchen I could see my mother had left a note for me.

Robert,

Afraid I have some bad news for you. When I went to take the garbage out last night I found Mary lying in her backyard, drunk and passed out. Called an ambulance and she is at Lutheran General. Dad's friend Kavolcheck (commander in our district) tracked Dick's car down and he is at the hospital now. Maybe you had better go over there.

Mom

P.S. Come home tonight! I don't like to be alone when your father isn't here.

My foot hit the picket fence as I tried to jump it and I tumbled on to Dick's driveway. My hand was cut and my stomach hurt. I ran into the office and then to their kitchen. Mary's sister, Laura, was standing there.

"What happened Laura?"

"Hi Shan- Shan! Your hand.!"

I looked down and blood was trickling down my fingers. I reached for the faucet but her hand was already there. The Cold water soothed it.

"What happened?"

"Mary got on the bus yesterday and came back with a bottle, apparently. I guess you know the rest. Where the hell were you and Dick?"

"Is he still at Lutheran General?"

"Yes."

"Thanks. I'll see you later."

I took the elevator to the Alcoholic Rehibilitation Unit and he was in the waiting room. He was sitting there, staring out

the window. When he saw me his mouth opened but no words came out, until I spoke. He told me the details and his manner of conversation was that of a tired, tired man. I could sense that he was resigned to something although what I could not tell. We sat for a half hour and then went down to the cafeteria. After we ate breakfast I ordered two cups of hot tea to go. We went outside to my car and I reached under the seat for a half pint of white rum I always kept there. We sat some more and sipped our rum and tea. He asked me what time it was; he said she was scheduled to be awoken at eleven o'clock and he could see her then. He gulped down the rest of his tea and crushed the styrofoam cup.

"Look guy, the company is going to be depending on you for a while."

"Yeah, I'll be there. Don't worry about that." He nodded his head. "Yeah. Good."

"Oh, I gave some more thought to the landscaping thing."

"Yeah?"

"I talked to Frank. He says he was a farmer in the old country. Probably could handle this with ease."

"Good." He nodded his head again. "Good thinking guy." He got out of the car and started to close the door but hesitated. "Hey, drop by the house tonight."

"Sure."

"O.K. See you then."

I called Wanda at the bank when I came home. She already knew what happened.

"You have to get out now, Robert."

"I'll stay till she's on her feet again. Then he'll have to do the rest himself."

We didn't speak for a few seconds.

"This wasn't your fault."

"I don't know. I can't sit here and say I had nothing to do with it."

"Come over tonight and we'll talk about it."

"No. Tomorrow, maybe. Not tonight."

I went out to the garden. I started to dig. Chris was standing near the fence and I lifted him over into our yard. I returned to my digging while he tried in vain to hit a plastic baseball with a full sized bat. He came over to me and crouched down, resting on the back of his feet.

"Why you do that?"

"I don't know Chris. Seems kind of senseless sometimes."

It was three years later on a snowy Thursday afternoon in November when the myth was finally destroyed. The old man, who is retired now, heard the shots. He had to break the door down, but it wouldn't have made any difference if it had been wide open. Her heart was in several pieces when he found her. What puzzled him later was where she got the forty-five. As we sat after breakfast in our suits waiting to go the funeral he told me he had talked to Kavolcheck this morning. Apparently the last deception had been hers. An old college friend of hers, who had recently been released from prison, had given her what she needed.

Fresh snow had fallen last night. It was still coming down when we reached the cemetary. It was cold and the flakes were large. Since there had been no viewing there was a large crowd around the burial site. My parents and I stood a few feet behind the priest. There was only one flower arrangement on the casket. They were carnations and I knew where they came from. They were from the greenhouse Dick had bought a few years back. That was after I had left him to work as a tax assesor downtown. Frank had been put in charge of the greenhouse. He was then able to bring his entire family over to this country, and they were all here this morning. Dick sat somewhat slouched in a folding chair, the casket separating himself and the priest. He sat there in a daze, looking straight ahead, never glancing except for once when our eyes met.

When the ceremony ended snow had nearly covered the top of the casket.

I went to Dave's that afternoon. Almost a year had passed since I was last there. Dave knew; his silence showed it. I finished my fourth boilermaker when I signaled him for another. He walked around the bar and put a quarter in the pool table.

"Come on. Let's play."

I told his to stick it up his ass, that I wanted a bottle of beer and a shot of whiskey. He walked up behind me.

"That's enough."

I grabbed my empty shot glass, swung around on my stool and stood in front of him. "Get it, or I'll break this glass over your thick head."

The old bastard was fast and he took it out of my hands. He put it on the pool table and stood looking at me.

"Go on home. It's all over now. It's over."

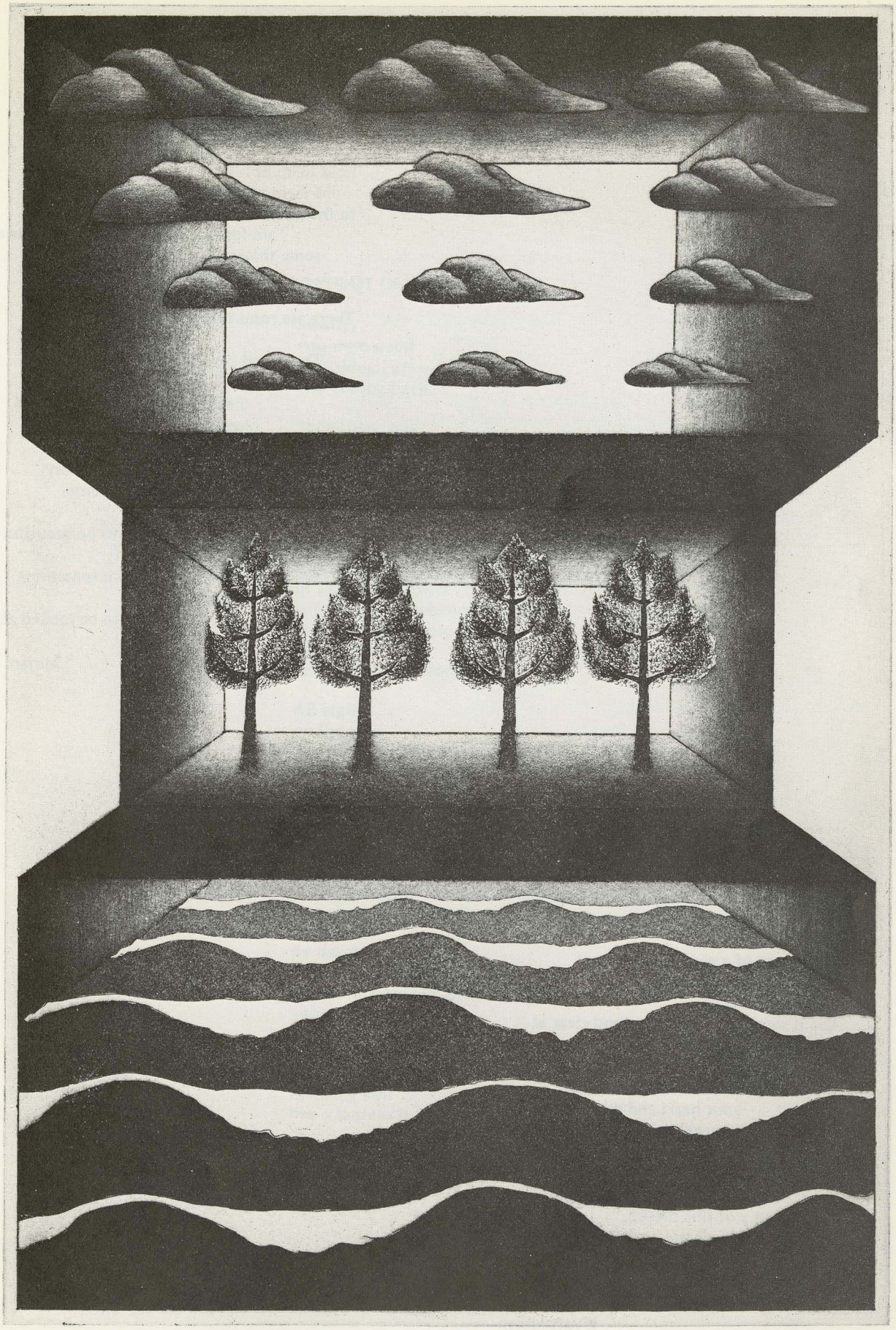
So I went to Wanda's. I had been there quite often in the past three years. I had my own key and no one was home yet. I started a blaze in the fireplace and went to the kitchen for a bottle of beer. I stood in the living room, looking out the front window, drinking my beer. It was dark outside and still snowing. The streetlights were on and I could see the snowflakes were bigger than they were this morning. The fire was the only light in the house and I sat in front of it in an upholstered rocking chair Wanda had bought for me last Christmas. After a while Dale, her thirteen year old son came in. He looked at me for a few moments and went straight upstairs.

I must have sat there an hour or so, I couldn't remember. I was thinking how all the older people seemed so immune to what had happened. The old man and my mother David, even Frank; they seemed to take it in stride. Maybe they knew it was coming. Maybe they had prepared themselves. Maybe I had known too, but I could only visualize it as a terrible onslaught of force that had no form, no connection. They were probably better able to conceive tragedy because they had felt it many, many more times than I. They had been waiting for the product only. The process they knew.

Dale put a beer down next to me. He knew he could not say anything, that he did not understand or know everything that had happened so the only thing he could do was to try to make it bearable for someone who almost could not bear it anymore. He was a smart kid.

My eyes felt raw and my face was wet. My eyes could move yet my face felt like plaster of Paris when it first dries. Wanda came in and sat down on the couch. She did not say anything. She must have turned the stereo system on because I heard music that wasn't there before. We sat there. She got up after a while. She took my hand and we went into her room. We lay there with our clothes on, huddled together under the covers. A chill went through me when I remembered how cold it was in the cemetary this morning. I wondered what we had seen when our eyes met this morning. I went to sleep.

Kevin Thomas



For Michael

There are roses
that feign to be fragile
sheer defense
and a deeply embedded
fear of death
hold them up:
hold them up to the point of beauty
to the point when I
am forced to look at them with awe
some things (in a very delicate way)
command respect.

There are roses that feign to be fragile,
to be weak
They need pity but, want more
to be loved,
need to be touched instead of
always watched.
A twisted kind of arrogance
holds them above honesty
and beauty becomes a pretense.
Too often I am fooled
by things that appear to be beautiful
and I catch myself
trying to reach something
that wants
merely to be looked at.

Miriam Carmen

This is part of a page of torn pages
from a book written
by a torn heart.
And if some of the words sound clear at
times and fade away into
that time you remember
like a waterfall that filled
your heart and mine too.
And like a bird pecking at bread crumbs
you lead your life deep into
the wilds where the only sound
you hear is your lonely heart.
Drink deeply of this silence,
to me this is the happiest
of sounds.

Wyatt Miller

PORTRAIT OF A SMALL ARTIST

Mostly,
you were good
at making coffee
and staring back.

Then there was
the habit you had
of rocking
like one of the Greek's boats
tied up on Dock Street.

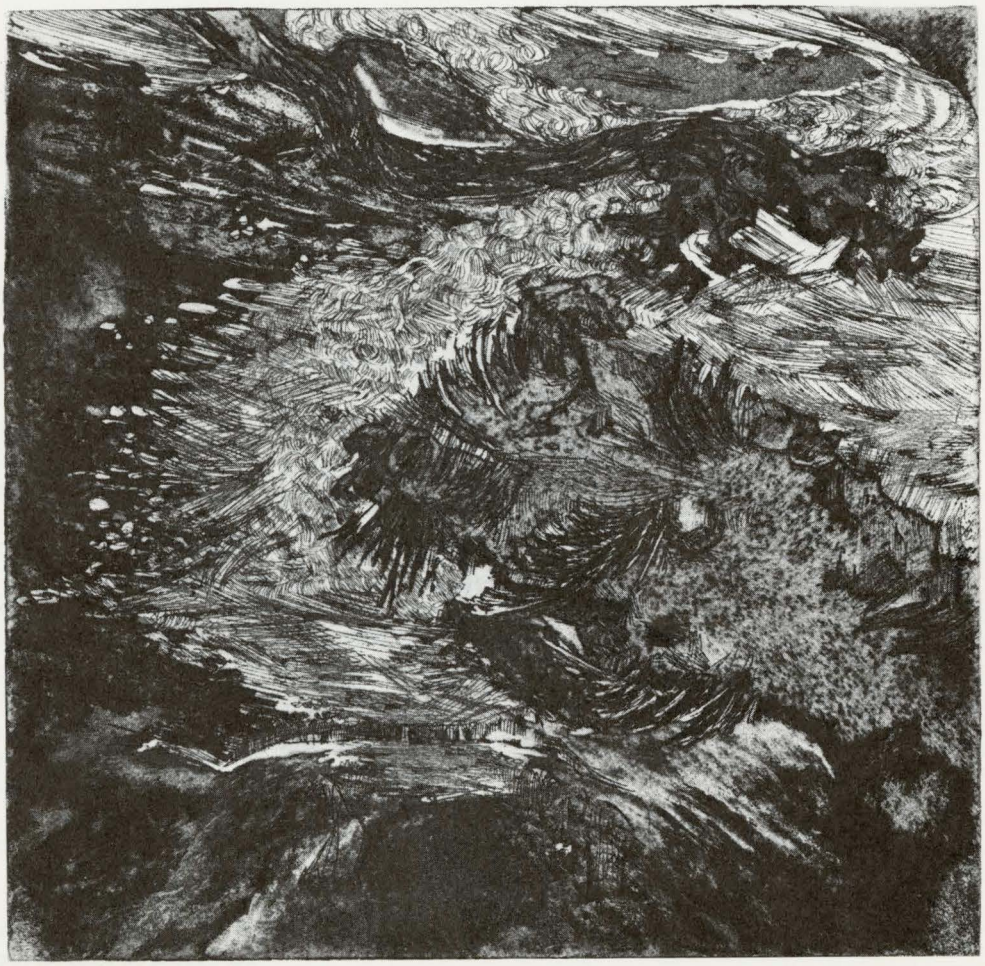
And on the stoop,
tugging the knot
of your neckerchief
with the same solemn patience
as the woman loosening
her apron
behind a screen door.

All night
on the warf
you were the dock watchman
for Lewis Construction
Site

There
You rocked
sunken
with pleasure

By dawn,
down from the clobber
of men in hardhats hammering
above you
came your old friend
the foreman
swinging his thermos over a yawn,
reaching you
like a lantern in the fog.

Judith Harris



Untitled

Barely
the new day,
both bare
we slip and slide.
Slip, v.: to lose one's balance
and fall, as in ice;
I have slipped into your arms.
Slide, v.: to move over a slick surface;
You slide over me,
You move me like water.

Judy Kastner

THE FIELD

when I had dirt roads for reality
crooked grass crowding the center
I thought god a dragonfly
speeding in diverse directions.

river tides came in went out
sun rose and sank
mirrored flat though rippled
demonstrative though absentee.

we played in green corn
faces near the dirt
waiting to be found, secure
since someone would find us.

the brown corn staggers across
the field, half fallen.
quail rise up like spirits
from the sharp stalks.

on the ground
I am hiding
hiding

Jack Greer

Sonnet

It is warm and damp this morning and you
are sure that you love your child. From the
porch you watch him playing in the courtyard
and the feeling of love comes to you like
breath.

But the air will not always feel like milk
on your pulse, the sky will not always hold
this tiny courtyard in misty blankets, and
the sun will not always be hidden as the face
of a suckling child.

Some days will be sharp and clear. The
sky will be extended. And in the dry glory
of the noon day sun, your child will reach
for it.

But today you sit here loving him. Good.
Some days will be like this, some will not.

Patrick McGrath

YOUR QUILL WHINES, CRIES UPON THE BACKS OF MEN

Your quill whines, cries upon the backs of men,
Cat-like claws attack a peace of ignorance:
"From fetal to fatal, from then to when?"

Uneasy thought in lions' dens descend,
When woods alone provide not sustenance,
Your quill whines, cries upon the backs of men.

The Christian in you falters on a choked amen,
And soon he too joins in the paper chants:
"From fetal to fatal, from then to when?"

Flashing greens illumine dark, no-exit den,
And when you see the worn-down crosses on the wall, in petulance
Your quill whines, cries upon the backs of men.

You keep its sound from waxy ears of children;
But shall the shut-eyed babies bow and prance
"From fetal to fatal, from then to when?"

Or will they too dance upon the cavern's end
And come upon an echo, their inheritance?
Your quill whines, cries upon the backs of men,
"From fetal to fatal, from then to when?"

Yvette D. Jones

I'm terrible at masking
or else I'm terrible good
thought henry, falling,
as he starts to write.
Henry need to find the
good seed man, to get
good and planted before the
cold. But it's funee he
feel cold already and
walk around like a mobile
cold spot. Henry just wanting
to plant his own seed
a warm spot to till
like he feel inside--he don't
think this preliminary cold
will doo much good for getting
used to; but he'll keep going
and see; masking it. As I said
henry's terrible at masking or else
he's...

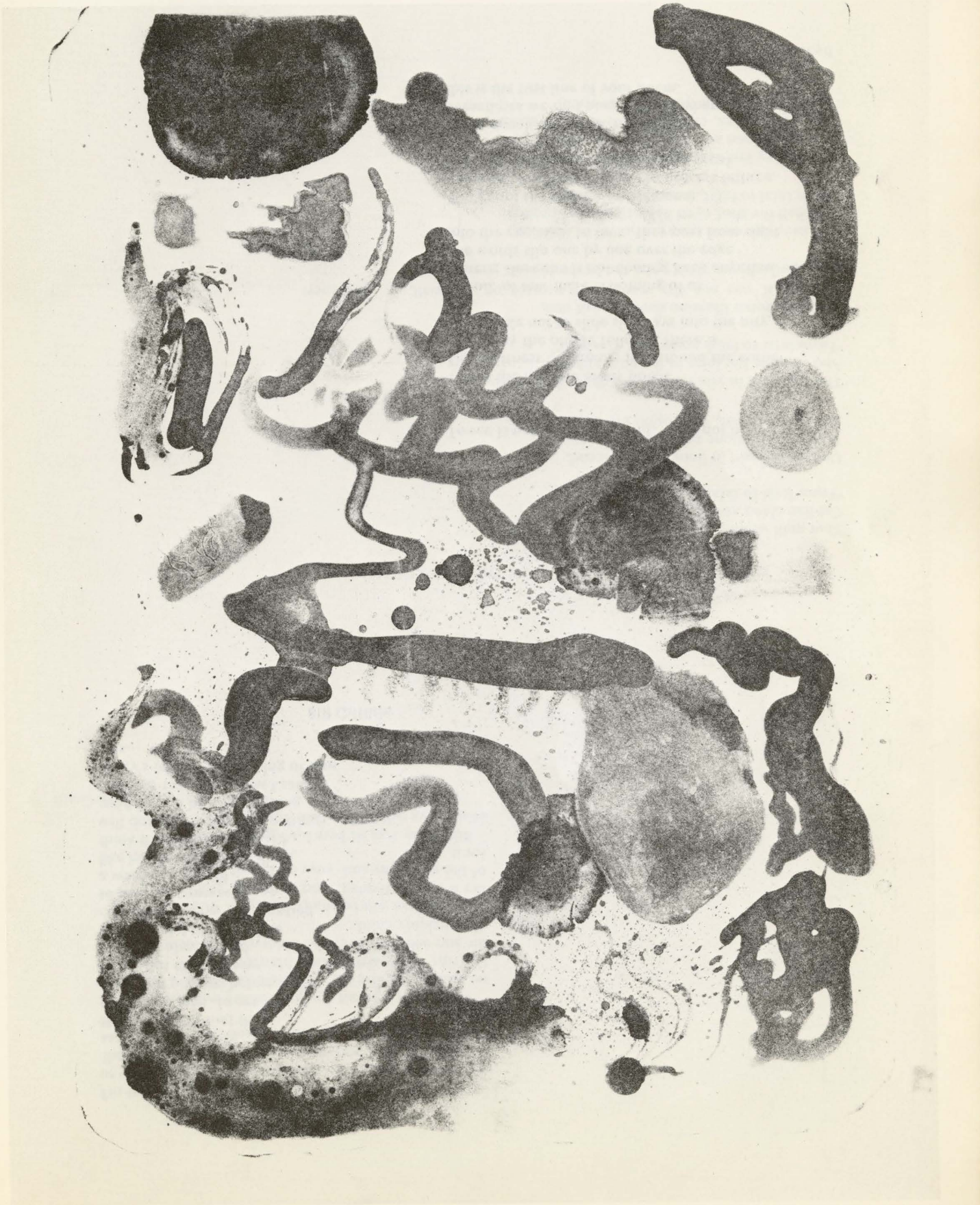
Bill Griffiths

To see is not merely to shout, 'I am not blind!'

This is the last line of my poem.
The swiftness of turning, just around the corner
is the way the phrase follows. There is
a scramble not to slide sideways into the pity

of you, of me, there is nothing of us
in here; the echo is not coming back anymore.
The words slip one by one over the edge
into the crevasse. In time, they pass from sight.

This is not the way to write a poem.
It would be infinitely easier to process lettuce,
turn over a new evasive leaf, so to speak...

So, to speak is not just anything.
Sometimes we find ourselves anywhere. Inevitably:
this is the first line of your poem.

Bill Lloyd